

THE TOTAL CHURCH GROWTH MODEL
AND THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:
A WAY UP FROM DECLINE

A Professional Project
presented to the faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont
in partial fulfillment for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

Ronald Zenefski

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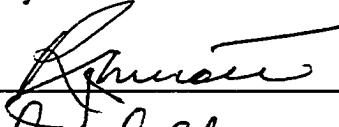
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Alan W. Rhodes

April 4, 1985
Date


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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to offer a practical solution to the declining membership patterns in the local churches of the United Methodist Church. The project centers on the presentation and explanation of the Total Church Growth Model which was developed by the Church Growth consultants at the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth. The working assumption of the model is that the local church is a cybernetic system.

In chapter II the theology and methodology of the Church Growth Movement is explored in the light of its critics and supporters. Particular attention is given to developing a mutually acceptable understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. Special attention is paid to the concept of evangelisation and announcing the reign of God.

Chapter III directs our attention to the person and ministry of John Wesley as he anticipated and used methods similiar to those advocated by the Church Growth Movement of today.

Chapter IV gives a detailed explanation of the theory and workings of Cybernetics and how the Total Church Growth Model can be applied to a local United Methodist Church.

Church V gives the findings of field research done on five local United Methodist Church which participated in the use of the Model. A summary of the results for each church is given.

Chapter VI summarizes the project and makes recommendations for the use of the model throughout the United Methodist Church and calls for the support of the Bishops to urge such usage.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY PROJECT

This project deals with finding a solution to the declining membership trend in the United Methodist Church.

THESIS

My thesis is that if a United Methodist Church accepts the principles for church growth proposed by the Church Growth Movement and incorporates these into their total program, using "The Total Church Growth Model," it will experience a renewed spiritual vitality among its members and see a reversal in the downward trend in its membership.

DEFINITION OF MAJOR TERMS

Church Growth

From the Constitution of the Academy for American Church Growth we have this definition:

Church Growth is that science which investigates the planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's commission to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20 RSV).

Church Growth strives to combine the external theological principles of God's Word concerning the expansion of the Church with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as its initial

form of reference, the foundational work done by Donald MacGavran.¹

Church Growth Movement

In 1980 the Church Growth Movement celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The historical event now regarded as the beginning of the movement was Donald McGavran's publication of the Bridges of God in 1955. Subsequent activities by McGavran, including the founding of the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission and the Institute of Church Growth in Pasadena, California, in 1965, the recruiting of the nation's largest missiology faculty, and the publication of his major work, Understanding Church Growth, in 1970, laid solid foundations² for the subsequent development of the movement.

The Fuller Church Growth Institute, the spearhead organization for the whole Church Growth Movement, has as its stated purpose, ". . . to focus both the theological academic excellence and evangelistic zeal on the task of building Christ's Church,"³ This can be understood to mean that they are attempting to use the best that scholarship has to offer from the fields of Biblical research, Theology, anthropology, sociology, Church History and Missiology to develop working principles which, when applied with the fervency of the Spirit of God, will promote health and growth in the Church.

¹Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).

²Ibid.

³"Church Growth is People" (flier, 1983).

Total Church Growth Model

This cybernetic model for church growth was developed by Mel Schell, the Southeastern Regional Affiliate of the "Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth," Pasadena, California.

It concentrates its emphasis on church growth in three major dimensions:

1. Internal Growth (discipleship and renewal)
2. External Growth (conversion and transfer of members)
3. Operational Growth (Administration and Organization of infra-structure)

THE SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The focus of this project is on the American Church scene and, in particular, the white, urban and suburban, United Methodist Church.

No attempt will be made to research or to apply the findings to churches outside this country or to those of an ethnic make-up which, racially or culturally, differ from this specified area. It is a fundamental mistake to assume that churches outside these parameters do not differ so greatly as to make it necessary to exclude them from this study. It is not known that they cannot benefit from the program. There is simply no attempt being made to suggest

that what will be recommended be considered universal in application. It should be noted, however, that to say there may not be universal application is not to say that the findings should be rejected. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of United Methodist Churches do fall within this category and should be given the opportunity to gain benefit, if there be any benefit to be gained.

The United Methodist Church in the United States has, with very rare exceptions, been experiencing a decline in membership for almost two decades. Most individual congregations lack the research apparatus to thoroughly understand their local situation, internally or externally. Most lack knowledge of available "growth principles" which would inform them as to how to resolve the problem and reverse the trend of membership loss. Many seem indifferent to do so.

For those United Methodist congregations who desire desperately to carry out the Gospel imperatives and who have a deep desire to see Christ's Church increase and mature, to be vital and viable to those it seeks to win and serve, this project may offer substantial help and hope.

PROCEDURE FOR INTEGRATION

I will survey the literature coming from the leaders in the Church Growth Movement and those critical of it, giving particular attention to the "growth principles" and other pertinent factors relating to the study at hand. Special attention will be given to training materials for the

Total Church Growth Model.

Using the information and insights gained from this survey, field research in the form of video taped interviews will be conducted in five United Methodist Churches in the greater Atlanta, Georgia, area. Identical questionnaires will be used in each interview. A synopsis of those interviews will be given for each church, and the complete written verbatim from one of the churches will be appended to this project. The actual video tapes of all the interviews will be made available.

Particular attention will be given to:

1. The starting point of each congregation engaged in the program.
2. Each congregation's actual evaluation of the process itself.
3. The results of the program relative to change and growth for the church.

Because the present writer is a United Methodist clergyperson with first-hand experience with four local United Methodist congregations over a period of eleven years, it should suffice to say that additional research into the organizational structure and functional operations of United Methodist churches is not necessary. This experience, however, is called upon in drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

INTENTION

It is intended that this project will present a working model for church program planning and administration which, when used in the United Methodist Church, can produce growth.

Because this model, The Total Church Growth Model, is a product of the Charles E. Fuller Institute for Evangelism and Church Growth, a leader in the American Church Growth Movement, it is considered by some people to be outside United Methodist tradition and practice. Therefore, presentation of the theology and methodology of the Church Growth Movement will be made in Chapter II. The intention is to show that this theology and resultant methodology is, in fact, very consistent with United Methodist tradition and practice and is suitable for use in line with their own heritage, theology and tradition.

Chapter III explores John Wesley's understanding and use of Church Growth principles and methods as he anticipated them in his work in England, which began the movement which has become the United Methodist Church.

Chapter IV will present The Total Church Growth Model, beginning with an introduction of the principle of cybernetics which informs it. The model will be explained and the procedure for its integration into a local church will be demonstrated.

Because this model is presently being used in a number of United Methodist Churches, it is possible to present, in Chapter V, findings of field research done in five United Methodist Churches in the greater Atlanta, Georgia, Area. This research sought to discover the results experienced by these churches as they used this model in planning their church programs.

The final chapter will be a summary and a presentation of the conclusions which can be drawn from the entire project.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The Church of Jesus Christ in America faces unprecedented challenges from the technologically complex, socially sophisticated, and extremely pluralistic culture in which it finds itself. The culture has, in its collective consciousness, all but lost any idea that there is an eternal, spiritual and transcendent aspect to reality, and thus the individual members of it do not automatically or readily look to the Church for direction or support. There is a general cynicism towards the Church's leadership, which expresses a skepticism that that leadership is willing or able to understand and appreciate the great complexities of the culture or that it is able to speak an authoritative word to it. Where there is still the response of faith, there is a growing suspicion among the diverse groups that make up our

collective culture that the Church is not able to provide communities of faith where it is possible to worship God, explore reality, fellowship and celebrate in ways that best meet their particular needs and express their own uniqueness.

The United Methodist Church is in a tenable position to make a vital contribution to the Church and to the American culture. A broad pluralism characterizes its collective theology. It has a very sophisticated and workable polity. A highly educated, articulate clergy gives able leadership to an informed and active laity, and yet, this historically dynamic and powerful church seems to be hesitating as if it had lost its sense of direction and impetus.

The United Methodist Church, from its beginnings as a movement, has had as its primary concern the reconciliation of persons to God and the formulation of these persons into communities for spiritual nurture and growth which will affect the societies in which they exist.

Until the mid-1960's this church had been expanding rapidly with a maximum membership of over 11,000,000. For the last two decades it has experienced an alarming decline of approximately 10% each decade. While a general decline in membership has also been the case in other "mainline" denominations in this country, this has not been the case with conservative and fundamentalist churches, here or abroad. There is cause for concern here.

As we come to the last years of this century, and as the United Methodist Church begins its third century of witness and service for Christ and the World, it is imperative that it not lose its way or the drive which has carried it so wonderfully thus far. Its voice, message and "style" are highly relevant, particularly for our time. Other ecclesiastical voices have attracted some, for the moment, but those voices often have a simplistic message which will wear thin upon repeated hearing, and, as it wears thin, that message will be discarded. If the United Methodist Church (and other mainline churches) has passed from the contemporary scene as a viable alternative, and if the simplistic message now being heard from so many pulpits comes to be understood by the world as "the" message of the Christian Church, the world will turn from this message and the church and could be left without an authentic human voice speaking for God.

CHAPTER II

CHURCH GROWTH THEOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the author will explore the theology and methodology of the Church Growth Movement. An attempt will be made to show that this theology, and the resultant methodology, is consistent with "mainline" theological positions relative to the nature and mission of the church.

There has not been a serious effort on the part of the Church Growth Movement to articulate a comprehensive theological position concerning the church and its mission. The reasons for this will be looked at briefly. The lack of such a treatise has opened the Movement to much misunderstanding and resultant criticism from many people positioned at various points along the theological spectrum.

A comprehensive theological statement on the nature and mission of the church, in light of Church Growth, would be extremely helpful but cannot be included within the limits of this project. What will be presented is a set of extrapolations developed from the author's readings, personal conferences and classroom work at both the School of Theology at Claremont and Fuller Theological Seminary. This set of extrapolations, taken as a whole, should present a statement useful to further theological understanding among those within and without the Church Growth Movement and may even encourage future mutual efforts in the advancement of the church in the world.

Because this chapter is written with the hope of improving relations between churches, the author will borrow freely from the writings of both critics and proponents of the Church Growth Movement.

Some Church Growth writers have been silent or vague on some important theological issues. They have been harshly challenged for this. I will let the critics' challenges form the theological position, when they are what the Church Growth writers would have written, had they thought to do so. A fair representation of different challenges should develop a theological position that will reveal the shared understandings and common goals of the church.

Many people have searched for a unifying theme around which to unite the various groups discussing Church Growth. This chapter suggests that one such theme might be "evangelism." The reader might catch a bit of irony in the choice of evangelism as the unifying theme since it has not served well in the past to unify those thinking about the mission of the church. Granted, some have said, "Yes, evangelism is the mission of the church." Others have countered with nearly the opposite, "Certainly, evangelism is a task of the church, but it is not the task of the church." Because of this very debate, evangelism, albeit in a new key, is the suggested choice.

This new key is suggested to us by Mortimer Arias, Bishop Emeritus of the Methodist Church in Bolivia. In his small but important book, Announcing the Reign of God, he has shown how it is possible for us to reshape and expand our definitions of evangelism, making it viable, once again, as the focus needed to speak comprehensively of the mission of the church.

The various positions concerning the mission of the church can be coordinated into a comprehensive whole, and the unnatural dichotomies can be joined. The nature and mission of the church must be seen as a single piece. Just as the church has been accurately described as the Body of Christ, and each member in it of infinite value and relative place, so the various tasks of the total church are seen to make up the whole, each with its relative and indispensable value.

Certain methodologies suggested by the Church Growth Movement have been held suspect by some and rejected outright by others. In light of the theological discussions, several of the important methodological issues will be reviewed.

There is a burgeoning bibliography developing on the subject of theology and methodology in church growth. Religious bookstores now have whole sections of: "Church Growth." Magazine editors have devoted entire issues to the discussion. Indeed, entirely new magazines and newsletters have emerged, and the debate is not over.

To be sure, not every ecclesiastical debate has been

an important one. Ask any first year seminarian. This one appears to be different. Simply to see some theologians and pastors reaching for their Bibles is worth the study. The issue is important because it spins on the nature of the church, itself; on its purpose, on its mission, on its uniqueness among the many other human enterprises. There is cause for rejoicing.

No one would seriously disagree that the church is in constant need of renewal and change. There are always encrustations to be broken up, spiritual inertia to be overcome, movements to be reversed and new frontiers to be explored. The "Old Ship of Zion" has sailed off course more than once. New hands have been needed to steer it aright. Some have even introduced new direction points.

Donald McGavran, C. Peter Wagner and others of the Church Growth Movement have carried some new charts into the wheel room, and many people think they should be heard. These men, with their insights from practical experience on the mission field and training in cultural anthropology, linguistics, communications, social psychology and phenomenology have introduced an expanded hermeneutic for us to consider. Because of this new and exciting hermeneutic, the entire issue of the nature and mission of the church has been called up for review.

At first reading, many people might be led to believe that the Church Growth Movement is "a-theological." C. Peter

Wagner has spoken to this:

Donald McGavran, though his theological roots are in the Restoration Movement (Christian Churches, Disciples of Christ), has assiduously attempted not to allow church growth teaching to identify itself with any particular paradigm of systematic theology. Church Growth principles have intentionally been kept as atheological as possible, on the assumption that they can be adapted to fit into virtually any systematic theological tradition. McGavran's first colleague in the Fuller School of World Mission, for example, was Alan R. Tippet, who, as a Methodist, came out of a Wesleyan theological tradition. He found church growth principles compatible, and had a great deal to say about how they fit in with prevenient grace. McGavran's successor as Dean of the School was Arthur F. Glasser, a Reformed Presbyterian, who sees church growth theology from the point of view of a somewhat modified Reformed hermeneutic.¹

Wagner's own impression is that, "Church Growth cannot reasonably be labeled as Reformed or Wesleyan or Lutheran or Calvinistic or Pietistic or Pelagian or Arminian." "It can," says Wagner, "be labeled as evangelistic."

The movement appears not to have come from any theological arena but from somewhere else altogether. Rather than being "a-theological," it should be considered "extra-theological." Wagner writes:

In any case, it is the clear intention of the Church Growth Movement to combine the 'ought' and the 'is,' the theological and the phenomenological, the normative and the descriptive in a balanced way that does justice both to God's revelation in Scripture and God's working in the hearts and lives of people in concrete historical situations.²

¹C. Peter Wagner, Church Growth and the Whole Gospel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) 83.

²Ibid., 152.

Third-World theologians have been doing theology like this, for some time now, under the label of "ortho-praxis." Like the Third-World theologies, rather than simply attempting to explain the world, the Church Growth Movement is attempting to change it.

The methodologies presented in the Church Growth literature are practical applications of the theological positions the Church has held. They are the means whereby the ideals are to be reached. They are sub-scripts for "doing theology."

THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

A "Covenant Community"

Ralph H. Elliott, a sometime critic of Church Growth theology and methodology, writes:

The Church, with her roots deep in the Old Testament, has been called into being by two acts of God - the salvation event of Exodus in the Old Testament and the redemption event of Christ in the New Testament.³

With Elliott, the Church Growth Movement sees the Church as a covenant community which had its beginnings in Israel's call in the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 19-24). The continuation of that call is reiterated by the writer of I Peter (I Peter 2:8-10). In viewing the church as such a community, many have made reference to its similarities to

³Ralph H. Elliott, Church Growth that Counts (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1982) 17.

the ancient Hittite suzerainty covenant with its format of prelude, stipulation and ratification:

God is the will maker who makes certain claims upon Israel, the recipient of the will. God's delivering action in the Exodus event is the basis of God's right to make such a claim. The claim is that these people shall recognize a particular relationship and serve in a particular role.⁴

This particular people of God are to live in the midst of all the people of God as a living demonstration of wholeness, serving as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Their uniqueness lies in the fact that theirs is a faith relationship and a moral relationship rather than merely a racial or ethnic relationship. That the people are "other" than those about them makes it possible for Israel to serve as . . . a bridge between God and human-kind and vice versa. This is the essence of the church's purpose at any stage in her history.⁵

Most theologians make frequent reference to the idea that the church, as the people of God, is a covenant community and remains so as members carry out covenant responsibility. Many think the nature of the Church is inextricably bound up with this covenant responsibility. Wilbert Shenk, another sometime critic, writes:

The New Testament describes the church and mission as a unity. As Johannes Blauw wrote, "There is no other church than the church sent into the world, and there is no other mission than that of the Church of Christ." . . . a close study of the New Testament shows that the church's mission is not one activity among many legitimate responsibilities; mission is its raison d'etre.⁶

The call of the church is essentially to be a people

⁴Ibid., 20.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Wilbert R. Shenk (ed.) Exploring Church Growth. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 212.

in mission. No mission, no people (I Peter 2).

Elliott writes;

Whatever the time frame of the church, she is always a special creation of people for God, elected to special ministry for God on behalf of all humanity and addressing herself to all humanity. Even as God did not call Abraham just to be Abraham or Jacob just to be Jacob or the twelve disciples just to be twelve disciples but to become the people of God, so God did not call the people of God to privilege but to privileged responsibility.⁷

Whenever we encounter images of the church in Scripture, the image used is always, essentially, for something other than itself. Its essence is in its utility. Metaphors for the church abound: salt, light, city set on a hill, wedding guests, a tree with wide branches, a net, God's planting. Even as "the body of Christ," which seems to suggest something essentially for itself, the whole serves the parts; and even then, as it serves itself, it does so that it might, as a healthy body, serve those beyond itself.

The experience of the Salvation Event is in the call/election. It is lived out in a relationship with God. The relationship is continued by virtue of the obedient fulfillment of the stipulations of the covenant - that is, as those who are called to carry out the purpose of their calling - the declaration of the grace of God. This declaration is to be in word and deed. The church's uniqueness, as a people, is precisely in its constant and faithful ministry of the

⁷Elliott, 18.

reconciliation and wholeness that is the living testimony of the grace of God.

As mentioned above, the nature of the church is bound up in its mission. If "declaring the grace of God" is to be the demonstration of its essence as the people of God, then it can be suggested that "evangelism" is to be the mission of the church. An expanded understanding of evangelism is necessary for a clear understanding of the church's mission.

A PREMISE AND CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING THE TASK OF EVANGELISM

The Biblical writers were convinced that there was a God Who was and is sovereign over all reality - Who governs absolutely in all spheres. God's reign or governance was described as universal, extending beyond the dimensions of time and space. These writers understood God to be both immanent in the created order (the created order existing because of God's governance), and transcendent over this created order, reigning above or outside it.

The very early writers struggled with the concept of God as a local deity Who, somehow, was more than that. They represented God as all powerful - a very present Being with Whom they must deal at every exigency.

As the priestly caste emerged, the notion of God's transcendence moved into the forefront. God was high and lifted up, inaccessible, touched only by the few, experienced

only indirectly.

The prophets began calling the people back from this ethereal notion of God to the idea of a God Who was near and powerful, but equally present and powerful to the ends of the earth - all-powerful, ruling over all the peoples of the earth and controlling events of nature and politics.

As the individual Biblical writers struggled to place first one then the other of these truths before their audiences, an implicit dualism emerged. This implied two realms of reality: a reality as one might immediately understand reality; a "here and now" reality - temporal, spacial, physical reality; and an "out there and eternal" reality - personal, relational, or perhaps even trans-personal - a wholly other reality.

As differing religious convictions took the ascendent position, God was brought near or placed at a distance from the people. Perhaps, since the Exile, God, for the most part, was relegated to the wholly other reality and was limited to that realm. This duality, especially as it pertained to God's governance, appeared to be actual when it was considered that there was no real evidence of God's presence in the physical world and that, for most people, God's governance or rule was not experienced personally or evident in corporate societies. Individuals generally imagine and act in a manner that gives the impression that we do so autonomously, as if we are self-governed - a law unto ourselves. Humankind, from

time to time, might acknowledge that God may, in fact, reign "out there," and often there is a pathetic accusation framed in the cliché, "Act of God," relative to some tragedy in the physical realm, but most people give little credence to any idea that God's governance can or does have any effect on what happens in this realm, either in the physical, interpersonal or personal.

The prophets developed the theme that the transcendent Reign of God was going to one day implode into the kingdom of this world and that this world's self-governance would begin to disintegrate and would finally pass away.

Those who began to understand that the Transcendent God was going to bring His reign into this realm, once and for all, began to perceive this advent as Good News, for they understood God to be Just, Merciful and Loving. They expected that God's Reign would be in line with His character. The advent of God's Reign into this realm was Good News for those who were experiencing oppression, injustice, and denigration of any kind. The prophets were not unaware that this Good News for the many would be Bad News, judgment, for those who oppressed, ruled unjustly or who created inhuman conditions for others. These writers of old often overbalanced their positive messages of the "Day of the Lord" with an over-emphasis on the negative message of the "Wrath of the Lord" which was to come.

The Old Testament prophets began to declare that the peoples of the earth should begin to "prepare a way for the coming of the Lord." John, the Baptizer, Among others, saw a deeper dimension to the coming of the Lord and began to demand that the acts of preparation be understood as personal and spiritual. He declared that the people should make the way ready by repenting of their sins. Most succinctly, John saw that the Reign of God would begin as a personal Reign in the hearts of persons. Men and women would ultimately not only give political allegiance to God, organizing themselves socially to conform to God's ways, they would begin this reorientation on a radically personal level, obeying God's rule from a willing mind and heart, bending their own wills to the Will of God.

It remained for Jesus to articulate the ramifications of this in-breaking Reign of God and to outline the ultimate end. In Jesus, we have the summary articulation and the experience of the long-awaited Good News. He was not only the ultimate announcer of the Good News, He was the Good News. In Him, God's Reign was begun. He was the framer of the constitution of the New Kingdom on earth. His words and deeds - His very life - expressed implicitly and explicitly all that the Reign of God was to mean for all who would receive it. His earthly ministry was a perpetual call to "come and experience the Kingdom of God." His words and deeds

shaped the nuances of what those who followed Him were to be about as they aligned themselves with God's Reign. Among other truths, His death graphically illustrated that the Kingdom, while breaking in, would experience grave resistance. His resurrection speaks of the ultimate triumph of this in-breaking Kingdom over that kingdom which now is and which is even now passing away.

His followers continued the announcement of the Good News of God's inbreaking Reign but reshaped the message, focusing on the Advent of the person and work of Jesus. For them, to accept the Kingdom of God was to follow and pledge allegiance to God's Son, Jesus, the Christ.

Everything that was understood and everything that came to be understood about Jesus became a mandate for the Kingdom. That which was a Kingdom mandate became the message of the Kingdom. All power and authority necessary to bring the Kingdom or Reign of God accompanied Jesus and works through those who would seek to be a part of what God is doing to set up this Reign.

Having heard the Good News, that is, having responded to it, having let it call us out of the kingdom which is passing away, we are to become evangelists, heralds, announcers of the Kingdom which is breaking in. We who are the recipients of the benefits of the Kingdom are to be the agents for the Kingdom. We experience the benefits of the

Kingdom by conforming to its dynamic and direction. Our conformity, in itself, becomes a form of proclamation, but we are also to be proclaimers in words and deeds - personally and corporately. We are to call others to share what we are experiencing. As each of us responds to God's inbreaking initiative, the Kingdom grows multi-dimensionally, and we become witness to and evidence of the Good News that God's Reign has begun.

While John, the Baptizer, was in prison, waiting for whatever Herod would do with him, he began to question whether Jesus was, indeed, the One who would usher in the Kingdom/Reign of God. He sent disciples to ask Jesus if He was the One or if they should look for another, Jesus answered them:

Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.⁸

The evidences of the presence of the Kingdom of God are the spiritual, physical and social changes which can be observed, the life-giving and life-enhancing experiences which flow out of the recognition and realization of the coming of the Kingdom.

When we who are of the Kingdom are questioned, and

⁸Matthew 11:5, RSV.

evidence is demanded of us, we are to point to the phenomenon of the Reign of God in our own experiences. We are to bear witness that God wills things such as these because it is the nature of God's Reign. It is the essence of our Evangel to proclaim the Good News and to get ourselves and others ready to experience what God is and will be doing. We are to invite those now unaware of God's Kingdom to repent and join those experiencing that which is going to be.

Evangelism is announcing the Kingdom of God, calling others from their current activities, calling for justice, liberation and reconciliation, proclaiming hope, aligning ourselves against those activities which countermand that which is to become the ultimate reality. It is to call women and men into a personal relationship with God, as made possible in Jesus Christ. It is to call others into a relationship with God which is to be lived out in gratitude for sins forgiven, for a life redeemed. It is a call to a creative relationship where one is encouraged to grow and mature into a fully human person, physically, emotionally, mentally and socially balanced. It is a call to experience ever-expanding, inclusive relationships where each is given the vision of being in solidarity with every other person and, in fact, with all creation. It is a call to experience all that humanity connotes in our historical reality combined with transcendence with God.

Arias writes of trying to find a context in which to view the task of evangelism:

Meanwhile, I began to see that every item I had been claiming as essential to a truly biblical and contemporary evangelization was a natural component of evangelization in the perspective of the Kingdom.

He continues:

Why did I not see it before? Kingdom evangelization may be the answer to our present crisis. The vision of the reign of God can be the motivation force which takes us beyond the paralyzing effect of our contradictory and worn out motivations. A comprehensive New Testament Theology of the kingdom can help us get beyond our present reductionisms and minitheologies of "evangelism." The multidimensional nature of the kingdom will not let us take our internal debate concerning the "spiritual and material," the "individual and social," the "historical and eternal," "evangelism and social action," and so on. Participation in the dynamic kingdom of God, which is in-breaking through history to its final consummation, may become the most creative experience to inspire new methods and means of sharing and incarnating the good news of the kingdom in our generation.¹⁰

The idea that the nature and mission of the church is inextricably bound up in evangelism might lead us to see that the arguments on this whole subject are parallel problematically to the argument between the four blind men trying to describe the elephant. To truly begin to get the task in perspective is to begin to get the task accomplished. As each one begins to respect the perspective of the others, the whole will make sense, and each will understand the broader implications of his/her separate interest and calling.

⁹Mortimer Arias, Announcing the Reign of God (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) xvi.

¹⁰Ibid., xvii.

THE MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

McGavran's understanding of the mission of the church comes under the heading "Service of Christ." Arthur F. Glasser, attempting to summarize McGavran's thinking, writes:

When the Apostle Paul said that there are "varieties of service but the same Lord" he included all the forms which the service of Christ may take within the fellowship of the people of God and among the people of the world. All spiritual gifts are for the equipment of the saints, for this work of ministry, in which the Body of Christ is built up (Eph. 4:8, 12). According to Scripture the term "ministry" embraces both the specific service of material relief and the total range of Christian duties, whether internally to the believing corpus or externally to the unbelieving world. The whole church is called to this diaconate. When every part of the Body is "working properly" the result is both bodily growth and spiritual up-building "in love." It should be noted that Paul's phrase: "building up the body of Christ" uses the same word found in our Lord's affirmation: "I will build my Church." Since Christ's building of the Church involves both conversion growth and perfection growth the ministry of the diaconate is external as well as internal.¹¹

A "schema" of this might be diagrammed this way:

MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD					
INTERNAL			EXTERNAL		
TO THE BODY			THROUGH THE BODY		
Worship	Sharing	Teaching	Service	Reconciliation	Mission
Spiritual	Social	Intellectual	Physical	Social	Spiritual

¹¹Arthur F. Glasser, in Harvie M. Conn (ed.) Theological Perspectives on Church Growth (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976) 27.

The basic internal purpose of the church is to provide for the Christian growth and mutual care of its members. Externally its basic purpose is to communicate God's redemptive work to fellow human beings and to society as a whole.¹²

Shenk's definition of the mission of the church as "a witness," "a fellowship," "a servant," and "a struggler for justice" clearly corresponds with Glasser's and Wagner's statements above. Shenk concludes his statement of the nature of the mission of the church with: "The church has no other reason to exist than to announce the kingdom, live out the kingdom, struggle on the side of the kingdom."¹³

gner,
) 17
¹²C. Peter Wagner, Our Kind of People (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973) 17.

¹³Shenk, 212-213.

EXCURSUS A

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH
TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

While McGavran and others have written as if the church and the Kingdom of God were one and the same, it is a mistake to understand the Church Growth Movement's position on the subject as being so. This is an important distinction, as the following will show. Eddie Gibbs, a Church Growth advocate clarifies the Movement's position:

In our concern for church growth it is imperative that we discern the relationship between the growth of the Church and the realization of the Kingdom. Too close an identification will blind us to the shortcomings of the institutional Church, so that church growth becomes denominational aggrandizement.

On the other hand to disassociate the Church from the kingdom breaks the nerve-cord of hope and destroys the community of commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord.¹⁴

Gibbs goes on to quote Pannenberg:

Christ points the Church toward the Kingdom of God that is beyond the Church. To the degree that the Church follows his pointing and heeds his reminder, the Kingdom of God will manifest itself through the Church.¹⁵

Hans Küng, apparently neutral in the Church Growth debate, challenges all, at this point, concerning the church and the Kingdom of God:

¹⁴Eddie Gibbs, I Believe in Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 80.

¹⁵Ibid.

So far from stressing identity, we should be concerned to stress the basic difference between the Church and the reign of God. To apply to the Church what is said in the New Testament about the reign of God will inevitably lead to an intolerable glorification of the Church, the presentation of an ecclesiologia gloria with the Church as its end. This is to forget that the power and the glory of the reign of God are still to come, that the promises made through and in the Church have not yet been fulfilled, that the Church is called to pilgrimage, not to rest. It is to forget that the Church is composed of men, and sinful men at that; it is to forget that the Church's preaching, its baptism and its Lord's Supper are announcing something that has not yet been fulfilled.¹⁶

Küng goes on to describe the church as a "pilgrimage through the interim period of the last days." It is a human community with righteous and sinner, alike, in its numbers.

Ekklesia grows from below, can be organized, is the product of development and progress and dialectic, in short is definitely the work of man; basileia comes from above, is an unprepared action, an incalculable event, in short is definitely the work of God.¹⁷

There is one final note before we leave Küng in this discussion. Much Scripture is used to speak of the church as if it were something consummated, as if it must be "the way God intended it," meaning, for many, that it must be without fault, perfect. This is particularly so as critics reject some of the methodology suggested by the Church Growth Movement, which seems to allow for a seemingly "imperfect" church. Küng would seem to be addressing this issue when he writes:

It is not the Church but the consummated reign of God which is reflected in so many parables: those of the tree

¹⁶Hans Küng, The Church (Garden City: Image Books, 1976) 130-131.

¹⁷Ibid., 131.

overshadowing the earth, of the rich harvest, of the feast given by God, of the eschatological marriage of God which is the goal of creation: The new creation, in which the distinctions between the Church and the world will be overcome. The term "God's kingdom," which indicates something finished and complete is apposite, not for the basileia which has irrupted into the present, but for this consummated cosmic basileia and the images used for it.¹⁸

¹⁸Ibid.

THE CHURCH IN HISTORICAL REALITY

As the church, the chosen people of God, seeks to live out its covenant responsibilities of announcing the Reign of God within historical realities; as the church seeks to be "a witness," "a fellowship," "a servant" and "a struggler for justice;" we are informed by Scripture that we are to be "united in one body," mature after the "stature of the fulness of Christ," and faithful in and to our calling.

The meaning of the Scriptural injunctions for unity, maturity and faithfulness must be looked at carefully, lest we idealize them beyond meaningful proportions. This is not to seek lower standards in the face of "harsh realities." Surely God can always expect the highest from the People of God, but just because we want to be pleasing to God is the reason we seek to understand correctly what it is that is asked of us.

Unity

The Church Growth Movement certainly agrees with C. Rene Padilla when he writes:

Throughout the entire New Testament the oneness of the people of God as a oneness that transcends all outward distinctions is taken for granted. The thought is that with the coming of Jesus Christ all the barriers that divide humankind have been broken down and a new humanity is now taking shape in and through the church. God's purpose in Jesus Christ includes the oneness of the human race, and that oneness becomes visible in the church.¹⁹

¹⁹C. Rene Padilla, in Shenk, 285.

The Scripture says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 RSV). Padilla is correct, "The unity resulting from Christ's work is not an abstract unity but a new community in which life in Christ becomes the decisive factor."²⁰

It is true that:

In his death, Jesus Christ removed the wall that stood between the two systems which "the people" and "the nations" had lived in former days. Now both Jews and Gentiles stand as equals in the presence of God as members of a new fellowship that may be described as a city, a family, and a building. Thus the unity that God wills for the entire universe according to the first chapter of Ephesians becomes historically visible in a community where reconciliation both to God and to one another is possible on the basis of Christ's work.²¹

The question which arises is, "What is the nature of this unity?" Padilla answers this question by looking at the example of Jesus:

The apostles had no need to speculate as to what a community in which loyalty to Jesus Christ relativized all the differences would look like; they could look back to the community that Jesus had gathered around himself during his earthly ministry. True, he had not demanded a rigidly structured uniformity, yet he had attained the formation of a community that had been held together by common commitment to him, in the face of which all the differences that could have separated them had been overcome.²²

Küng writes:

The unity of the Church has nothing to do with the mythological magic of the number one and the intrinsic

²⁰Ibid., 286.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 288.

fascination of oneness. The unity of the Church is not simply a natural entity, is not simply moral unanimity and harmony, is not just sociological conformity and uniformity.

The unity of the Church is a spiritual entity.²³

Our fundamental unity as the people of God lies in the reality that, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as [we] were called to one hope that belongs to [our] call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). We do not arrive at this unity by "conciliatory subtraction of any elements which divide the Churches,"²⁴ lest we end up with "a very thin and insipid distillation."²⁵ Rather, we are one by virtue of commitment to and love of Jesus Christ. His acceptance of us on God's behalf has made us equal with one another, his life in us motivates us to transcend irrelevant differences.

This unity in Christ, however, allows for diversity of expression. We celebrate essential differences which have intrinsic value. Our race, our culture, our sexuality are all gifts of tremendous import. There is no call for homogenizing them.

Thus the unity of the Church presupposes a multiplicity of Churches; the various Churches do not need to deny their origins or their specific situations; their language, their history, their customs and traditions, their way of life and thought, their personal structure will differ fundamentally, and no one has the right to take this from them.²⁶

²³Küng, 353.

²⁴Ibid., 377.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 355.

In the New Testament Christ's Church is not seen as a centralized egalitarian or totalitarian monolith. The joyless constricting uniformity of a standardized institution or a standard type is foreign to it. It is not the nature of the Church to have a uniform form of worship, nor uniform hierarchies, nor even uniform theology.²⁷

The pluriform Church is a cacophony of sight and sound which is symphonic and kaleidoscopic when truly seen and heard. It is truly a "new creation" of God, a "new family" of adopted children for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Maturity

Maturity is the goal or desired end of every living thing. To be complete, lacking in nothing, is what maturity means. It is attainable. There is a process intimated. There is the idea of "growing up to be." One is not born "mature." Maturity is a relative term. An infant is mature in the sense that it is complete as an infant - there is nothing lacking that discounts it from being considered fully human. Compared to its father or mother or adolescent sibling, it is hardly complete, still it contains everything essential for it to become mature.

The church, at any time and in any place, is in some stage of maturity and immaturity in relationship to its own process and to the stature of Christ. Because of the nature

²⁷ Ibid.

of things, it will never reach maturity in the sense of completeness, because all living things are dynamic and in the process of becoming.

As the church views its potential essence displayed in Christ and looks at its own adolescence or perhaps even its infancy, it is challenged to "become." Nevertheless, it must also be self-consciously aware that it is the body of Christ wherein Christ is being formed. As the church is viewed objectively, juxtapositioned to Christ, we see its imperfections. We must not chide it as children chide the underdeveloped classmate. Rather, we must help it to see its maturity and instill hope for its further development.

As we consider "the stature of Christ," we must recognize that the writer of that phrase was developing an analogy. The church is to have within itself all the qualities which Christ manifested. It is to do what Christ was able to do with the exercise of those personal qualities. In addition, the church is to have that unique relationship with God which empowered Christ to do what he did.

The church will always be discovering new facets to the person of Jesus Christ. Conformity to what is seen will produce growth which will, in turn, create opportunities for deeper insights and thus more thorough transformation. It is a metamorphosis which is on-going until we are ultimately "changed."

Faithfulness

Robert A. Evans has given new insights concerning faithfulness in an article which he subtitles, "Theological Reflections on the Balance between Faithfulness and Effectiveness." Any discussion of faithfulness must have criteria for evaluation attached. Evans writes:

What God requires of the church is not growth but faithfulness. This thesis points to the biblical norm that is at the core of the Old and the New Testaments and is summarized by Jesus: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37).

In theological terms, H. Richard Niebuhr translates this biblical core to define the purpose of Christ's body, the church, as "the increase of the love of God and neighbor." God has made a covenant with those who believe. This covenant²⁸ requires faithfulness to God as the central commitment.

Evans gives substance to the idea of being "faithful" when he writes:

God requires faithfulness. However, faithfulness must always be applied to a specific situation. Love of God and neighbor must be effectively embodied if faithfulness is to have any meaning or power. Effectiveness can be defined in theological terms as the appropriate embodiment or expression of faithfulness in a given human context. Thus, God requires not only faithfulness, but also effectiveness.

Another way of understanding effectiveness is in terms of goals and the means applied to achieve those goals to which a Christian or a church is committed. The appro-

²⁸Robert A. Evans, "Recovering the Church's Transforming Middle," in Understanding Church Growth and Decline (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979) 293-294.

priateness of the goals must be decided on the grounds of faithfulness. However, effectiveness involves the appropriate coordination of means and ends for the sake of the overall purpose. One is unfaithful if the aims are misdirected. One is ineffective if the goals are disembodied.²⁹

The substance of the term, "faithfulness," in the context of the church and its relationship to God, is found in the concept of the covenant relationship established by God and entered into by the People of God. The church's "end of the bargain" is that it will consistently announce its relationship to God and live as the people of God. The living out of its relationship with God will manifest itself in proclamation and demonstration of the in-breaking of the Reign of God, which is to be for all. To lose its distinction or its voice is to run the risk of being unfaithful. The Biblical writers often used the analogy of infidelity in the marriage relationship to describe God's view of those who failed to live up to their covenant relationship with Him. To be faithful is to live in a loving relationship with God. It is to co-mingle or identify with God (The modern concept of individuality in the marriage relationship notwithstanding), we are to be one with God before the world. In so being, we are to invite others to join us, as the bride and groom invite others to their wedding.

²⁹Ibid., 295.

ECCLESIO-PRAXIS: THE DOING AND THE BEING OF THE CHURCH

As the discussion moves from the theories of the task of the church (Ecclesiology) to the means of accomplishing it (Ecclesio-Praxis), it is the suggestion of this project that we see the church and the achievement of its goals as moving along a continuum. Having discussed the idea of the church as being in the process of maturation, we might describe this continuum as an upward or outward progression. There is to be movement from the initial stages up through penultimate stages and on to ultimate stages. The outward direction might follow the analogy of the embryo developing into a complete organism. Speaking of the church as moving through stages or of being at any one particular stage at a moment in history is not to diminish the glory and wonder of the church, any more than it would diminish the glory and wonder of an acorn to call it penultimate to the mighty oak within it. At any stage in its existence, the church universal - or local - is a wonderful work of God. At the same time, future wonders are also contained in the church. The church is always "not yet" what it will or can be.

The church is always in the process of becoming. Those present within it are always discovering what the church can be. Those newly come to the church are only now beginning to understand what the church can be and what it will be for them and for others. In one sense, the entry

of each new person into the body slows the maturation process. There is always remedial work to do. The church will never be perfect or complete, with nothing to be changed or expanded upon. There are no apologies to be given. This is how it is.

Much of the tension which exists between the Church Growth proponents and their detractors could be resolved, or at least diminished, if the issues over which they seemingly disagree were not juxtapositioned in an adversarial relationship but rather were placed on this upward and outward continuum in realistic priority. In addition to understanding the church as having the over-arching responsibility of announcing the Reign of God, it would be helpful for those within the church to understand that while, at any one time, the church will be performing a multitude of tasks, these tasks can be primary or secondary, as there is always a starting point and a goal. The issue in "ecclesio-praxis," which frustrates and divides people, seems to turn on this idea of priority and the reluctance on the part of some to admit that it is necessary to start at a less than perfect place.

The Church Growth Movement, for instance, has been challenged because it has chosen to prioritize the Evangelistic Mandate ahead of the Cultural Mandate; to emphasize "discipling," seemingly at the expense of "perfecting," by placing evangelism ahead of nurture; and to allow persons to begin their spiritual journey in "homogeneous" units rather than first having to cross natural barriers and join the whole.

CHURCH GROWTH METHODOLOGIES

Having mentioned the issues which seem to divide those seeking to develop strategies for growth in the church, let us look at each more closely, keeping in mind that the issue is not their importance in the larger scheme of things but rather in their priority to one another.

The church has been given directives from God. They are mandates of the kingdom. Two crucial mandates which encompass all the others are the Cultural Mandate and the Evangelistic Mandate.

The Cultural Mandate

From the beginning, humankind has sought to understand its place in the scheme of things in this world. The church does the same. Taking our clue from what God has said to individuals, the church can receive its direction.

To clarify what we are to accomplish, God has given divine directives in the form of commandments or mandates. In the Biblical account, Adam and Eve were given the commandment:

Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and the wild animals. . . .³⁰

³⁰Genesis 1:28. GNB.

They were to "have dominion" over the created order, in a real sense, to share in the sovereignty of God. This order to have dominion can be considered to be the beginnings of a "cultural mandate." Wagner amplifies the meaning of this idea:

The specific content of the cultural mandate is awesome. God expects a great deal of those to whom he has entrusted the earth and all of its goodness. Distribution of wealth, the balancing of nature, marriage and the family, human government, keeping the peace, cultural integrity, liberation of the oppressed - these and other global responsibilities rightly fall within the cultural mandate. Since it is God's will that the human race live in shalom, those among them who have been born again into the kingdom who purport to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ are required to live lives³¹ that will promote shalom to the greatest extent possible.

The Old Testament writers, especially the Prophets, understood this mandate quite clearly. Their writings are a pouring forth of their struggle to keep it before the people of God. Jesus gave further definition and direction when he announced the direction of his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth. His words are recorded in Luke's Gospel:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has annointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.³²

When asked to sum up the totality of the Law and the

³¹Wagner, Church Growth, 13

³²Luke 4:18-19, RSV.

writings of the Prophets, in which one was supposedly to find God's understanding of how to be truly human, Jesus answered:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.³³

We who have been called to be the followers of Jesus Christ recognize that, as Jesus lived out this mandate in his own life, we, who are no greater than our Master, are not exempted from doing the same. There is no real cause to "spiritualize" the verses which identify the "poor," the "captives," the "blind," or the "oppressed" as the subjects of our concern and responsibility. The obvious intent of these verses is that there be relief brought to their physical, economic and social needs. The question is not should the poor be lifted, the sick healed, the injustices rectified. The question is when, how and by whom should it be accomplished. The church is to be the answer. What is to be our strategy? What is realistic, from a faith posture? Before an answer is advanced, let us look to the other mandate which the church has received.

The Evangelistic Mandate

As with the Cultural Mandate, we see the Evangelistic Mandate beginning with God interacting with Adam and Eve in the Genesis account in the Old Testament. The couple, having

³³Matthew, 22:37-39, RSV.

disobeyed God by eating the fruit, are attempting to hide from Him. "But the Lord God called the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'" From this account we discover God to be a "searching and finding God." Wagner writes:

The evangelistic mandate has continued down through the ages. It was given to Abraham when God chose him to be the father of his people, Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). It was repeated by Jesus. The whole history of redemption that is told in terms of covenant, sacrifice, atonement, repentance, new birth, the cross, and the resurrection sums up God's working out of the evangelistic mandate. God desires that those who should be in fellowship with him be found, loved, and brought back to the father. He is a people-seeking God.³⁴

One of the real mysteries is why an omnipotent God would choose to give the task of reconciliation of His rebellious children to those who would have been reconciled. "Why are human beings sent to bring other human beings to God?"

The coming of Jesus, the Christ, is the ultimate precedent for us. He came "seeking the lost." His stories created a new sense of the "kind of God" who wanted to be involved with humankind. As the Son came, instead of the Father; the church, instead of the Lord, is to go to those yet outside the gate.

As Jesus' earthly ministry was coming to a conclusion, he began to make plans for it to continue in and through those who followed him. Perhaps recognizing human tendencies to self-centeredness and self-aggrandizement, he gave them a

³⁴Wagner, Church Growth, 51.

commandment to go beyond their present community:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,³⁵ and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

The salient feature of this command is that his followers "Go . . . make disciples" of those outside their group. This command to "make disciples" included the idea of "baptizing them" and "teaching them to observe all that [Jesus] commanded." "Baptizing them" included the incorporation of these persons into a new community where they could be taught "all that [Jesus] had commanded" his followers to do. The essence of his teaching was summed up in the answer he gave to those who asked him what was the greatest commandment"

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.³⁶

Individuals in the new community were commanded to love one another as Jesus had loved them. It was to be learned that love was to be inclusive. Their community was to be open to all. The uniqueness of their community was to be its inclusiveness. No one who desired to be a part of it was to be barred from doing so.

The implications of the meaning of "love God" and "love

³⁵Matthew 28:18-20, RSV. ³⁶Matthew 37-39, RSV.

your neighbor" were to be continually discovered in the on-going experience of being this new community. The Lord Jesus would be with them. His presence in them, individually and corporately, would build them, until all attained, as the writer of the Ephesian letter wrote, " . . . to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ . . . " (Ephesians 4:13 RSV).

The evangelization of peoples and persons is, understandably, progressive. Persons being evangelized can be expected to move through stages of awareness and commitment. As the implications of the call to which they have responded become clearer, and their ability to change grows, their faith and their experience of the lord working in them should increase.

The proclamation of the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, would be made. Persons would be challenged to receive His efficacious work of reconciliation on God's behalf. Repentance would be sought and persons would be invited to align themselves with others who have decided to follow Jesus Christ, giving up their self-centeredness and sinful pride.

Disciplining and Perfecting

The Church Growth Movement, particularly influenced by McGavran's writings on this subject, has seen the process

of evangelization or Christianization as a two-fold task: disciplining and perfecting. McGavran alludes to an article he wrote entitled "How about that New Verb To Disciple?:"

In that I set forth three meanings of the verb [as it was being used], D 1, D 2, and D 3. D 1 would mean the turning of a non-Christian society for the first time to Christ. D 2 would mean the turning of an individual from non-faith to faith in Christ and his incorporation in a church. D 3 would mean teaching an existing³⁷ Christian as much of the truths of the Bible as possible.

In McGavran's mind D 1 and D 2 are legitimate understandings of discipling. He considers the definition of D 3 to be more correctly the definition of the process of "perfecting."

Quoting McGavran, Wagner clarifies the understanding of perfecting held by the Church Growth Movement.

. . . bringing about an ethical change in the disciplined group, an increasing achievement of a thoroughly Christian way of life for the community as a whole, the kind of holy living³⁸ which includes "social, racial and political justice."

Criticism Levelled

Critics of the Church Growth Movement have sharply challenged McGavran's differentiation of discipling and perfecting. There is a concern that the Gospel will be presented with minimal ethical content that persons might more readily

³⁷In Donald McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 170.

³⁸Wagner, Church Growth, 161,

accept it and thus begin their Christian commitment at a sub-Christian level.

Evans, sometime critic, writes:

The issue, from my perspective, is that the distinction and prioritizing of discipling over perfecting violates the biblical understanding of conversion and strait-jackets the perception of religious experience. In addition, it carries the danger of introducing a process akin to Bonhoeffer's "cheap grace." When the perfecting is finally pursued, it may cause a negative reaction and a falling away by the person originally disciplined - as is indeed predicted in the New Testament. Perhaps most damaging from the perspective of love of God and neighbor, this superficial discipling may produce a kind³⁹ of vaccination against the full meaning of the Gospel

Evans goes on to point out what he considers to be a serious flaw in the discipling (conversion) phase:

The Church Growth Movement and those in leadership positions in evangelism who have adopted this paradigm speak of the "postponement of ethical awareness" in presenting the gospel to potential converts. This attempt to make the gospel attractive and as palatable as possible seems, to me, a direct contradiction of the meaning of conversion in the New Testament. Conversion appears to mean a substantial change in one's being and perspective, a turning around that is never completed in this life but is on the way. Any self-conscious editing of the gospel requirements, resulting in ethical postponement in order to make the message initially more acceptable, seems especially⁴⁰ contradictory to what Jesus asks of new disciples.

It would appear that the issue here turns on what is essential for a person to know and be willing to do to be considered a "Christian."

³⁹Evans, 302.

⁴⁰Ibid., 303.

EXCURSUS B

WORLD VIEWS OR MIND SETS

In one way or another, persons develop ways of thinking which influence how they position themselves on issues they encounter. One might say they have a "mind set." This mind set is developed and then all decisions are filtered through it. Germane to our discussion are two such "sets": The "Bounded Set" and the "Centered Set."

The Bounded Set

The bounded set mentality sees everything categorically. Strict definitions or boundaries are established for each category. In the case of deciding who is or is not a Christian, as is customary in this way of thinking, standards are set. To be considered a Christian, a person must conform and perform within these pre-established limits - doctrinal agreement, moral and ethical conduct, or even political commitments. Unless a person "tests out" favorably, he or she is considered outside the faith. As one can readily see, this approach presupposes a great deal of maturation on the part of converts before there is acceptance of their genuineness as a brother or sister in Christ. Virtually all significant change or growth in the person's life is expected prior to the acknowledgement that he or she is "in" and little seems to be left after the person is judged "OK," or "one of us."

The Centered Set

The centered set mentality sees everything in terms of intentionality. Initially, there is only the center toward which a person is headed. In the case of deciding who is or is not a Christian, the direction of his or her life is the deciding factor. For a person to be considered a Christian, he or she must have turned from the love and service of self as the center of intentionality to the love and service of Christ. Doctrinal understanding may be fuzzy, or open-ended. Moral and ethical conduct may be in a state of flux, awaiting information. All other commitments stand open for investigation and choice. The only "testing" would be the putting of the question, Is Jesus Christ Lord of your life? As is readily apparent, a great deal of change and growth remain to occur. The importance of a socializing community is obvious. Faith and salvation will need to be "worked out" under the guidance of the Lord of the church and those who are the church.

It would be correct to say that the "bounded set" is quite static. It allows one to think that one has "arrived" - that all that remains is that one stays within the parameters. One is judged faithful by one's consistency.

It would be correct to say that the "centered set" is rather dynamic. The participant is constantly urged, either inwardly or from without, to bring more and more of his or

her life into alignment with his or her stated intention. As one is fostered in a group, the group will shape mutual expectations. One will be judged faithful by one's movement toward the center.

C. Peter Wagner, answering the criticism leveled at those advocating a centered set mentality, challenges those with the bounded set mentality with the charge of "exorbitant grace" and continues:

In Church Growth terminology, they are concerned that people will be disciplined, and fail to be perfected. Centered set thinking, however, does not allow this. It accepts people as Christians with a minimum of change in belief or behavior so long as there has been a radical change in allegiance at the center of their life. Self is dethroned and Christ is enthroned. Fetishes are burned and Holy Spirit power takes their place. Jesus is both savior and Lord. Perfection begins at that point and continues through the lifetime. The centered set understanding of Christianity is dynamic, and does not allow just turning toward Christ and then sitting there. It demands a continual movement toward Jesus Christ, a growth in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.⁴¹

With this understanding of the mandates before us, is there any really serious disagreement concerning which mandate must be understood as primary and which follows? Certainly both must be carried out. The end result of any evangelization of an individual is that his/her culture/society would also be evangelized or "Christianized." The question asked earlier was, "If the Church is to be the answer, what is to be our strategy?"

⁴¹Wagner, Church Growth, 131.

It would be realistic to approach the idea of Christianizing a culture by saying that it must be done in an on-going fashion to the extent that it is possible by those immediately affected and involved. McGavran would say that when Christians have become a significant percentage of the population able to enact legislation or to revolt in large enough numbers to effect a revolution, it should be done.

In "Social Action and Church Growth," McGavran's topic sentences are:

It should not be mission policy to foment rebellions among the masses and thus help them to achieve political, economic, and cultural goals.

With the Church it is otherwise. The Church is made up of citizens of the country. They are part and parcel of the oppressed and the oppressors. The Church cannot avoid the ceaseless struggle going on between the classes and the masses.

On occasion He [God] will direct them, as He did the Church during the days when the New Testament was being written, quietly to bear great injustices, such as slavery.

On occasion God will direct them as He did Moses, to defy the oppressor, in rebellion, confident that the Lord marches on before.

When churches multiply in a non-Christian population, they will bring God's purpose for His children to bear on the particular part of the social order which they can influence.⁴²

⁴²In McGavran, 292-293.

THE HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE

McGavran's observation that, "Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers." has raised a red flag to so many that it must be dealt with in any discussion of Church Growth. Wagner has done an exceedingly good job of answering the critics of the Church Growth Movement. Speaking to the homogeneous unit issue, he writes:

What I most regret about the matter is that, in the minds of some people, the homogeneous unit principle has assumed such proportions that it is considered the sum and substance of the Church Growth Movement. This is far from the case.

The homogeneous unit principle should be seen at the very beginning for what it really is: a tool which many have found helpful in implementing the evangelistic mandate.

In the first place, McGavran's statement is descriptive, not normative. It is phenomenological, not theological. He does not say, "Men ought to become Christians" but rather "Men like to become Christians."

Secondly, McGavran's statement relates to discipling, not perfecting. It is a principle of evangelism, not Christian nurture. The "men" of the statement refers to men (and, of course, women) who are unbelievers. They are not in the kingdom of God. Jesus is not their Lord. They know nothing of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If the gospel is presented in such a way that it carries racial overtones, and if becoming a Christian involves a social rather than a religious or spiritual decision, most of them will not even hear it.

It [the homogeneous unit principle] should not be interpreted as expounding the ideal way that Christians should relate to one another, but the way in which unbelievers become followers⁴³ of Jesus Christ and responsible members of his Church.

⁴³Wagner, Church Growth, 167-168.

The assumption is that as persons come into the experience of the love of God and are taught the fuller implications of the Gospel, they will be able to give up their exclusivity and chauvinism.

At the core of any issue concerning methodology is the question of legitimacy. Is it consistent with the stated purpose or goal. For some, the use of the homogeneous unit principle negates the message of the Gospel. It raises ethical issues of racism and prejudice. It would appear that it works against, rather than toward, unity in the church.

The critics of this principle for winning men and women to Christ and for incorporating them into his church should be heard in their own words. John Yoder writes:

The mystery entrusted to the Apostle Paul by revelation, according to Ephesians 2 and 3 was that the church is the unity of two kinds of people who were fundamentally incompatible through their culture, religions and otherwise.

Paul says the whole point of God's eternal purpose "revealed in my ministry" is that God wants to make one people out of these two kinds of people. That breaking down the wall between two ethnic groups is the gospel. It is not the fruit of the gospel; it is not an object lesson in the gospel;⁴⁴ it is not a vehicle of the gospel, it is the gospel.

Padilla writes:

The breaking down of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded [in the early church] as an essential aspect of the gospel, not merely as a result of it. Evangelism would therefore involve a call to be incorporated into a new humanity that included all kinds of people. Conversion was never a merely religious experience; it

⁴⁴John H. Yoder, in Wilbert R. Shenk (ed.) The Challenge of Church Growth (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973) 43-44.

was also a way of becoming a member of a community where people would find their identity in Christ rather than in their race, social status, or sex. The apostles would have agreed with Clowney's dictum that "The point at which human barriers are surmounted is the point at which a believer is joined to Christ and his people."⁴⁵

They [the Apostles] regarded Christian community across cultural barriers, not as an optional blessing to be enjoyed whenever circumstances were favorable to it or as an addendum that could be left out if deemed necessary to make the gospel more palatable, but as essential to Christian Commitment.⁴⁶

Elliott writes:

Let us face it. It is easier to work with "our kind" where everyone has basically the same roots and cultural tastes, the same prejudices, the same inbred assumptions that we are special beyond the next group. But does that easiness make it a mandate? How can the statement "God has made of one blood all . . ." (see Acts 17:26) in any manner be used as a directive for building upon separation? It is a gross heresy and sin to suggest that since people have prejudices, those biases should be capitalized upon and made an aid to Christianity.⁴⁷

Crossing cultural barriers is right at the heart of the Christian Gospel, and the rejection of the barriers that divided people is basic to the new community in Christ.⁴⁸

The maintenance of barriers between cultures contributes to the sense of exclusivity so that each unit begins to feel that it does not need what the other has to contribute because it is probably inferior anyway.

Homogeneity misses the major note of reconciliation as a key theme of the Christian gospel, breaking down of petitions between male and female, Jew and Greek, or whomever or whatever.

I think I must agree that where the church has insisted on remaining homogeneous, even though it may have

⁴⁵Clowney, cited by Padilla, 300.

⁴⁶Ibid., 301.

⁴⁷Elliott, 55.

⁴⁸Ibid., 60.

grown in the process, that failure to embrace all of Christ's family is a judgment rather than a commendation.⁴⁹

The objections to the use of the Homogeneous Unit Principle for these critics would appear to hinge on one point with several concerns leading out from it. The concern is that it appears to contradict the essence of the Gospel message, itself, which is reconciliation. There appears to be a disregard for the call to be a community, which is inherent in the Gospel message following the act of reconciliation. Behind these is the idea that, should the principle be used as a means to the desired end, the means might become the end, in itself.

The Gospel, as an encompassing reality, is that reconciliation can occur between God and humankind and between individuals, peoples and nations. The Gospel does call us into a new community which transcends human barriers. Nothing which proposes to bring this reality to be can allow for it to be only partially realized. Given this understanding, the consideration of how to realize the ends of the Gospel must be explored.

Liberation Precedes Reconciliation

Wagner calls our attention to the correlation between liberation and reconciliation.

⁴⁹Ibid.

The theme of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites," was reminiscent of the slogan of African nationalism: Uhuru and Harambee (freedom and unity). The order of those two words is not accidental, but reflects a widespread conviction of ethnic theologians that freedom or liberation must precede unity or reconciliation. This theme has not been a frequent subject of Western Theological reflection. Cone [James H. Cone] says that "this essential connection between liberation and reconciliation is virtually absent in the history of Christian thought." Sano [Roy I. Sano] criticizes Karl Barth who, following the Medieval and Reformation preoccupation with reconciliation, appears to be on dubious ground when he moves from reconciliation in volume 4 of Church Dogmatics to redemption in volume 5. "From the perspective of liberation theology," Sano asserts, "Barth proceeded backwards. In current parlance there can be no genuine reconciliation, peace and understanding without liberation from political, economic, cultural and religious oppression."⁵⁰

Reconciliation with God does not automatically ensure reconciliation between persons. The often-quoted verses in Ephesians 2 introduce the idea or principle that there is to be a cessation of hostility between two warring parties because the cause of that dispute has been done away with. Each person who comes to Christ, God's offer of reconciliation, is put on an equal footing before God and therefore with each other. In the case of the Jews and the Gentiles, their dispute was based on socio-religious differences. The Jews demanded that the Gentiles conform to Jewish religious and social practices before they could be judged "righteous." As the Jews began to understand the nature of the work of Christ on the cross, they relaxed their demands, and agreement

⁵⁰Wagner, Our Kind of People, 94.

between the two became possible. We must remember that, at the time of the writing, we have little more than an understanding of the principle elucidated. It took years for that principle to become reality. We might say that the barrier was removed, but the two groups faced each other for some time, neither venturing any overture of reconciliation. Then, little by little, eye contact was made, a head nodded, a shoulder dipped, a hand extended, and finally movement - ultimately, an embrace.

As in the case of all reconciliations, the causes of their estrangement and opposition had to be explored and overcome. Both groups needed to overcome their aloofness. Many times, responsibility for the breakdown of communication needs to be placed on one group or the other before reconciliation can take place.

Consider the conflict between a wealthy landowner and the impoverished laborers in his field. Even if both should become Christians, it would not necessarily mean they could become friends without effort. A simple redistribution of the resources would not bring them together as "one in Christ." Each would first have to be liberated from the need to relate to the other as they had previously done. This need may be conscious or unconscious. In either case, each must be released from that which established the separation before a new relationship between them can occur. Prior to this liberation, the barriers which exist would seem to be natural or

necessary or, at least, insurmountable. To expect reconciliation without first bringing liberation is unreasonable. To expect that unconverted/unliberated persons will cross barriers to hear the Gospel of this liberation is unrealistic. To expect that they must cross barriers to receive the Gospel is to reintroduce a new "Judaizing" (see Acts 15). The Gospel is the message that God has offered peace to all who would lay down their rebellion against Him. In addition, the Gospel presents a new way of being human together. It establishes a new humanity in which all are equal before God. It requires that we give up our sinful isolationism and chauvinistic attitudes, which prevent community with others unlike ourselves. Only as we experience unprecedented acceptance from God and the liberation this gives will we ever be open to accepting others into our circle, personally or corporately, or will we be willing to move from our own circle into "theirs."

Ghettos or Transitional Neighborhoods

Persons bound in their sins have isolated themselves from each other and from those other than "their kind." Strong prejudices rationalize their separateness. Fear causes them to draw "turf lines." The Gospel is an invitation to re-examine the many presuppositions which keep us where we are. The church, as a community of persons who have responded to God's love, is a place where persons can experi-

ence a new way of being human together. As one experiences the love of God in broadening ways, one's capacity is enlarged, and the focus of that love is diffused. Enlightenment comes. "There are others not of this fold."

The liberation that has occurred results in changed attitudes within the new community. Only now will the group be willing to include others.

The Gospel is presented as general and inclusive (whomsoever will). To be effective, it must be made specific (God loves you). From specific application it is then re-directed out from "me," "us," to "you," and then to "them," ultimately to "we." As I am made aware that "God so loves the world," I am challenged to broaden my own love to be inclusive of all whom God loves.

Rather than allowing persons to remain in their isolation in bondage to sin until they are ready to embrace all humanity (a very unlikely possibility) they are to be invited to embrace Christ in ways which do not demand extra-neous efforts. Taken from their ghettos, they move into transitional neighborhoods and ultimately experience integration.

It is important to note here that the homogeneous unit may continue to exist as a separate church which interacts and communes with the Church. Deep abiding love may flower and grow between members of the body of Christ as they retain their uniqueness and individuality. We are

called to unity but not to uniformity. As stated above, individuals and whole cultures and races have intrinsic differences which are always to be celebrated and preserved. To demand conformity and uniformity might result in "dehumanization" and "ethnocide."

Wagner writes:

A Christian is morally responsible both to God and to his own Christian community. Anything that would tend to extract a person from his natural web of cultural ties must not be considered as one of the demands imposed by the Christian faith.

Therefore, it seems clear that any teaching to the effect that Christianity requires a person to adapt to the culture of another homogeneous unit in order to become an authentic Christian is unethical because it is dehumanizing.⁵¹

Christians, of course, should reserve the right to change homogeneous units if they so desire, to deny that freedom would also be dehumanizing. Consequently, a requirement to change cultures, or to melt in a melting pot, or conversely, a requirement never to change cultures must not be allowed to become part of the Christian Gospel.⁵²

⁵¹Ibid., 98.

⁵²Ibid.

CHAPTER III

JOHN WESLEY AND CHURCH GROWTH

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the methods and principles John Wesley used to bring renewal to the church of his day and which began the movement which was to become the Methodist Church. While Wesley did not begin with any plan in mind, when he struck on something that worked, he systematically continued to use it and directed others to do the same. In most cases, where Wesley discovered a working principle or method, he instructed his followers to follow his lead precisely.

The four areas to be examined are:

- I. Wesley's preaching; his method and message
- II. Wesley's use of lay-leadership
- III. Wesley's use of class meetings
- IV. Wesley's understanding of the importance of homogeneous units" and "ripen" fields in the winning of large numbers to Christ.¹

The purpose of including this chapter is to show that, from an historical base, much of what is advocated by the Church Growth Movement is in line with Wesley's own action

¹"Homogeneous" is not Wesley's term, but it conforms to present day Church Growth terminology.

and thinking. While many changes have occurred in the Methodist Church's methodology, polity and tradition, much has remained the same. Wesley was quite ahead of his time, and much of what he did still has practical application, and many Methodist churches are willing to follow precedents he introduced.

WESLEY'S PREACHING: HIS METHOD AND MESSAGE

Let us consider this matter from the very beginning. Two young clergymen, not very remarkable in any way, having a tolerable measure of health (though rather weak than strong), began, about fifty years ago, to call sinners to repentance. This they did, for a time in many churches in and about London. But two difficulties arose: first, the churches were so crowded that many of the parishioners could not get in; secondly, they preached new doctrine - that we are saved by faith and that "without holiness no man could see the Lord." For one or the other of these reasons, they were not long suffered to preach in the churches. They then preached in Moorfields, Kennington Common and in many other public places.²

So begins Wesley's own explanation of the message and methods which God used in church renewal. Fresh from a renewal in his own spiritual life, Wesley began to preach the doctrine of "salvation by faith alone." He did this with power and persuasiveness, which brought huge crowds to hear him. He was soon forced to preach out-of-doors or turn people away.

²Albert C. Outler (ed.) John Wesley (3rd ed: New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) 109.

Commenting on this response, Wesley wrote:

A vast majority of the immense congregation in Moorfields were deeply serious. One such hour might convince any impartial man of the expediency of field-preaching. What building, except St. Paul's Church, would contain such a congregation? And if it would, what human voice could have reached them there? By repeated observations I find I can command thrice the number in the open aire that I can under a roof.³

Continuing his defense of this innovation he wrote:

Field-preaching was therefore a sudden expedient, a thing submitted to, because I thought preaching even thus, better than not preaching at all: First, in regard to my own soul, because, "a dispensation of the gospel being committed to me," I did not dare "not yo preach the gospel." Secondly, in regard to the souls of the others, whom I everywhere saw "seeking death in the error of their life."⁴

His open air preaching made him more accessible to the people, and more and more came to hear him. Because of the work schedules of the people, he most often preached at six in the morning and after six in the evening.

In the face of this great response, resistance began to arise, particularly among the clergy in the parishes in which he preached. While many disapproved of his new method, the greatest opposition came because of his message. This prompted Wesley, on numerous occasions, to write appeals that he be properly understood. In one such appeal entitled, "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion." Wesley wrote:

³John Wesley, The Journal of John Wesley (Chicago: Moody Press) 237.

⁴John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) VIII, 113.

In a former treatise I declared, in the plainest manner I could, both my principles and practice; and answered some of the most important, as well as common objections to each. But I have not delivered my own soul. I believe it is still incumbent upon me to answer other objections, particularly such as have been urged by those who are esteemed religious or reasonable men. These partly relate to the doctrines I teach.

I will briefly mention what those doctrines are, before I consider the objection against them. Now, all I teach respects either the nature and condition of justification, the nature and condition of salvation, the nature of justifying and saving faith, or the Author of faith and salvation.⁵

Wesley gave very precise definition to each of the doctrines he preached. On the nature of justification he writes, "It sometimes means our acquittal at the last day." but he goes further:

. . . Justification . . . [has the meaning of] present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and, consequently, acceptance with God; who therein "declares his righteousness" "for the remission of the sins that are past."⁶

By salvation I mean, not barely, according to the vulgar notion, deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, in mercy and truth. This implies all holy and heavenly tempers, and, by consequence, all holiness of conversation.

Justifying faith implies . . . a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he loved me, and gave himself for me. And the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him.⁸

Wesley took great pains to show that his doctrines

⁵Ibid. VIII, 46.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., VIII, 47.

⁸Ibid., 48.

coincided with those of the Church of England. As a defense against the claim that his principles, particularly "justification by faith alone," were his own, Wesley recounts from the Liturgy, the Articles, or the Homilies, of the Church of England all that was written on the matter, concluding:

And what more can you desire, who have hitherto opposed justification by faith alone, merely upon a principle of conscience; because you was [sic] zealous for holiness and good works? Do I not effectively secure these from contempt at the same time that I defend the doctrines of the Church?

Stanley Ayling writes:

Wesley, unlike Whitefield, taught that conversion and justification gave only present pardon for sins; "If a justified person does not do good, as he has opportunity, he will lose the grace he has received, and . . . will perish eternally." There was no everlasting guarantee, but there was the opportunity to labour towards "sanctification" and the possibility of attaining "Christian perfection" a condition of earthly sinlessness.¹⁰

In addition to strictly preaching on Scriptural doctrines, Ayling points out:

Contemporary moral corruption provided of course a theme he [Wesley] endlessly reverted to, but in particular the second part of his Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, published in 1746, became one long excoriation of English sinfulness. "What a weight of sin lies on this nation!" he lamented, and proceeded to spare hardly any aspect of its life. "To prove at large that the luxury and sensuality, the sloth and indolence, the effeminacy and false delicacy of our nation are with parallel, would be but lost labour." It was

⁹Ibid. VIII, 56.

¹⁰Stanely Ayling, John Wesley, (Cleveland: Collins, 1979) 126. He quotes Journal of John Wesley 1/8/41.

labour, nevertheless, he was prepared apparently to lose. "Even," he wrote, "Solomon in his glory, archetypal of hedonism, knew nothing of such modern abominations as horse-races, theatres, balls, assemblies, redottos, masquerades. And where in England was male chastity to be found? Among the nobility? Among the gentry? Among the tradesmen? Among the common people of England? How few laid claim to it at all!"¹¹

In a letter to a Reverend Mr. Perronet to give "an account of the whole economy of the people commonly called Methodist,"¹² Wesley writes:

About ten years ago, my brother and I were desired to preach in many parts of London. We had no view therein but, so far as we were able, (and we knew God could work by whomsoever it pleased him,) to convince those who would hear what true Christianity was, and to persuade them to embrace it.

The points we chiefly insisted upon were four: First, that orthodoxy, or right opinions, is at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all . . . that it is nothing short of, or different from, "the mind that was in Christ;" the image stamped upon the heart; inward righteousness attended with the peace of God; and "Joy in the Holy Ghost." Secondly, that the only way under heaven to this religion is, to "repent and believe the gospel . . . " Thirdly, that by this faith, "He that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, is justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ." And, lastly, that "being justified by faith," we taste of the heaven to which we are going; we are holy and happy; we tread down sin and fear, and "sit in heavenly places with Jesus Christ."¹³

The response to such preaching was wonderful. The number of converts mounted. Requests came in that Wesley

¹¹Ibid., 156.

¹²Wesley, Works, VIII, 248.

¹³Ibid., VIII, 249.

help them, ". . . being distressed on every side; as everyone strove to weaken, and none to strengthen, their hands in God."¹⁴ Wesley at first tried to make appointments to meet with them individually but soon found this to be impossible. Then he sought to meet them together in a special place.

Thus arose, without any previous design on either side, what was afterwards called a Society; a very innocent name, and very common in London, for any number of people associating themselves together. The thing proposed in their associating themselves together was obvious to everyone. They wanted to "flee from the wrath to come," and to assist each other in so doing. They therefore united themselves "in order to pray together, to receive exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation."¹⁵

WESLEY'S USE OF LAY-LEADERSHIP

As Wesley's work expanded, and he began to be overwhelmed with requests that he hold regular teaching times and give pastoral care, Wesley began to appoint lay persons to go in his stead to the different towns. In an answer to a letter from Samuel Walker requesting that he change this practice, Wesley wrote:

I have one point in view - to promote, so far as I am able, vital, practical religion; and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men. On this single principle I have hitherto proceeded, and taken no steps but in subserviency to it. With this view, when I found it to be absolutely necessary for the continuency of the work which God had begun in many souls (which their regular pastors generally used

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., VIII, 250.

all possible means to destroy), I permitted several of their brethren, whom I believe God had called thereto and qualified for the work, to comfort, exhort, and instruct those who were athirst for God or who walked in the light of his countenance.

But, as the persons so qualified were few and those who wanted their assistance very many, it followed that most of these were obliged to travel continually from place to place, and this occasioned several regulations from time to time, which were chiefly made in our Conferences.¹⁶

Wesley felt that many wonderful blessings followed the ministries of these dedicated laypeople and insisted that the problems with such an arrangement were far less than even he imagined might arise.

When pressed that these "preachers" should be ordained in the Church of England, Wesley replied:

Now, suppose we can effect that Peter Jaco and Thomas Johnson be ordained and settled in the curacies of Bur-
 yan and St. Just, and suppose William Crabb and William
 Alwood Fix at Launceston and Plymouth Dock as readers
 and exhorters, will this answer the end which I have in
 view so well as travelling through the country?¹⁷

In defense of his position concerning the use of these men and this itinerate arrangement, Wesley said, "Be their talents ever so great, they will ere long grow dead themselves, and so will most of those that hear them."¹⁸ Perhaps because Wesley knew these men had limited training, which would wear thin over an extended time, he chose to con-

¹⁶ John Wesley, The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. (London: Epworth Press, 1931) III, 192.

¹⁷ Ibid., III, 194.

¹⁸ Ibid., III, 195.

tinue the arrangement. Nevertheless, he had another motive for his program of lay-preachers/teachers.

Nor can I believe it was ever the will of our Lord that any congregation should have one teacher only. We have found by long and constant experience that a frequent change of teachers is best. This preacher has one talent, that another. No one whom I ever yet knew has all the talents which are needful for beginning, continuing, and perfecting the work of grace in a whole congregation.¹⁹

In addition to those who served as lay-preachers, Wesley developed other lay positions:

It remains only to give you a short account of those who serve their brethren in love. These are Leaders of classes and bands [to be described below], Assistants,²⁰ Stewards, Visitors of the sick, and Schoolmasters.

Each of the persons in these positions received supervision and proper instruction for the separate tasks. This released Wesley and the other preachers from the nurturing responsibilities that they might continue to reach others for Christ. Wesley was concerned not only that men and women profess Christ, but that they mature in Christ and become responsible members of Christ's Church.

WESLEY'S USE OF CLASS MEETINGS

Indeed, one of the most serendipitous developments in the ministry of John Wesley was the Class meeting. Deeply concerned over the spiritual welfare of his converts while he or his laypreachers could not be present, Wesley sought a plan.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Wesley, Works, VIII, 261.

At length, while we were thinking of quite another thing, we struck upon a method for which we have had cause to bless God ever since. I was talking with several of the society in Bristol concerning the means of paying the debts there, when one stood up and said, "Let every member of the society give a penny a week till all are paid," Another answered, "But many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it," "Then," said he, "put eleven of the poorest with me; and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbors weekly; receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." It was done. In a while, some of these informed me, they found such an one did not live as he ought. It struck me immediately, "This is the thing; the very thing we have wanted so long." I called together all the leaders of the classes, (so we used to term them and their companies,) and desired, that each make a particular inquiry ^{into} the behavior of those who he saw weekly. They did so.²¹

A relatively uncomplicated system for shepherding these people developed. The Class leaders met with their classes once a week. This was first done in the homes of individual members; but the procedure changed, and the members began meeting in the leader's home. The leaders then met with the minister and the stewards (those appointed to oversee practical matters such as finances and property). During these meetings with the Leaders, the ministers learned of those who were sick and those who failed to live up to the religious standards. The stewards were also given the money collected.

When challenged that some of the Class Leaders might be lacking in the gifts and graces for such a task, Wesley responded, "If any of these is remarkably wanting in gifts or graces, he is soon taken notice of and removed."²² He added:

²¹Ibid., VIII, 252.

²²Ibid.

It may be hoped they will all be better than they are, both by experience and observation, and by the advice given by the Minister every Tuesday night, and the prayers (then in particular) offered up for them.²³

The class periods included times for prayer, spiritual examination, singing and praising God.

A system was developed whereby members of one class could move to another class in a different town. Members would be interviewed quarterly by Wesley or one of his appointees.

To each of those whose seriousness and good conversion I found no reason to doubt, I [Wesley] gave a ticket prepared for that purpose; every ticket implying as strong a recommendation of the person to whom it was given as if I had wrote at length, "I believe the bearer²⁴ hereof to be one that fears God and works righteousness."

As these class meetings developed, there arose a need for times of deeper intimacy. Sometimes the men and women wanted to meet separately for some reason. At times, there was a need to confess sin. Classes were further divided into bands for such special occasions. Wesley saw great benefit from these arrangements.

Great and many are the advantages which have ever since flowed from this closer union of the believers with each other. They prayed for one another, that they might be healed of the faults they had confessed; and it was so. The chains were broken, the bands were burst in sunder, and sin had no more dominion over them. Many were delivered from the temptation out of which, till then, they found no way to escape. They were built up in our most holy faith. They rejoiced in the Lord more abundantly. They were strengthened in love, and more effectively provoked to abound in every good work.²⁵

²³Ibid., VIII, 255. ²⁴Ibid., VIII, 256.

²⁵Ibid., VIII. 259.

WESLEY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF
HOMOGENEOUS UNITS AND "RIPEN FIELDS" IN THE
WINNING OF LARGE NUMBERS TO CHRIST.

In Wesley's day, small towns throughout England and on the islands off the coast were, for the most part, homogeneous in nature. This was due to the fact that one or another particular industry often dominated each town. Not unlike the steel mill or cotton mill towns in our own northern and southern states, each town was made up of a particular socio-economic class of people whose lifestyle and personal value systems were quite similar. It was Wesley's habit, either by design or intuition, to approach the people of these towns as a unit. Often he would find the whole town at the same place spiritually, and he would deal with them as with one person. In the larger towns, where there were several different social classes, he was careful to direct his preaching to one select class of people at a time. The more ungodly the people, the more ripe for the harvest he considered them to be, and the more concern for them he felt. His Journal is filled with examples of this:

I went to South Biddick, a village of colliers, seven miles southeast of Newcastle. The spot where I was stood was just at the bottom of a semicircular hill, but on the rising sides of which many hundreds stood; but far more on the plain beneath. I cried to them in the words of the prophet, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" Deep attention sat on every face; so that here also I believe it would be well to preach weekly.²⁶

²⁶Wesley, Journal, 113.

I rode to the Three-cornered Down (so called), nine or ten miles east of St. Ives, where we found two or three hundred tinnners, who had been some time waiting for us.²⁷

I had a great desire to visit a little village called Placey, about ten measured miles north of Newcastle, it is inhabited by colliers only, and such as had been always in the first rank for savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. I felt great compassion for these poor creatures from the time I heard of them first; and the more, because all men seemed to despair of them.²⁸

I had had for some time a great desire to go publish the love of God our Saviour, if it were but for one day, in the Isles of Scilly, and I had occasionally mentioned it to several . . . About half an hour after one, we landed on St. Mary's, the chief of the inhabited islands.

. . . The minister not being willing I should preach in the church, I preached, at six, in the streets to almost all the town and many soldiers, sailors, and workmen on, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" It was a blessed time so that I scarcely knew how to conclude. After the sermon I gave them some little books and hymns, which they were so eager to receive that they were ready to tear them and me to pieces.²⁹

Wesley was somewhat incredulous that these people had all found their way to this island.

For what political reason such a number of workmen were gathered together and employed at so large an expense to fortify a few barren rocks, which whosoever would take, deserves to have them for his pains, I could not possibly devise: but a providential reason was easy to discover. God might call them together to hear the gospel, which perhaps otherwise they might never have thought of.³⁰

Wesley was not just a preacher to the poor in

²⁷ Ibid., 117.

²⁸ Ibid., 113.

²⁹ Ibid., 118.

³⁰ Ibid., 119

outlying towns:

I was greatly moved with compassion for the rich that were there, to whom I made a particular application. Some of them seemed to attend, while others drove away their coaches from so uncouth a preacher.³¹

The "Ripen Fields" of those who needed to hear of Christ and respond to his offer of salvation always moved Wesley:

I returned to Bristol. I have seen no part of England so pleasant for sixty or seventy miles together as those parts of Wales I have been in. And most of the inhabitants are indeed ripe for the gospel.³²

We came to Newcastle about six; and, after a short refreshment, walked into town. I was surprised; so much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing (even from the mouths of little children) do I never remember to have seen and heard before, in so small a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."³³

Wesley, throughout his ministry, felt great concern for those in the military. However, he soon became aware that even he was limited in whom he could win for Christ. Stanley Ayling tells of Wesley's attempt to preach to an Anglo-Hanoverian army of 15,000 men. Wesley had asked permission to preach, and it was granted. Ayling writes:

Wesley was even able to exercise his rusty German on some of the foreign troops hanging disconsolately about the Town Moor (they "drank in every word"); but he was not able to claim any electrifying results among the English redcoats. They listened on the whole politely, but "the words of a scholar did not affect them like those of a dragoon or a grenadier."³⁴

³¹Ibid., 75.

³²Ibid., 81.

³³Ibid., 97

³⁴Ayling, 155.

The study of Wesley's methods for the renewal of the Church of England is far from being exhausted in this short chapter. Much should be written about Wesley's running debate in letters to those who opposed or misunderstood him. Much should be studied about his constant companion, Brother Charles, and his new hymns and music used in the revival. All of this is outside of the scope of this paper.

Wesley, in all his methods, was intensely pragmatic. He wanted to win souls for the Kingdom of God. He used what worked in his day. When asked about future generations, he replied:

I am not careful for what may be a hundred years hence. He who governed the world before I was born shall take care of it likewise when I am dead. My part is to improve the present moment. And whatever may be the fruits . . . when you and I are gone to our long home, every serious man has cause to bless God for those he may see with his eyes, for the saving ³⁵so many souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins.

³⁵Outler, 5.

CHAPTER IV

THE TOTAL CHURCH GROWTH MODEL

This chapter will describe and illustrate the program entitled "The Total Church Growth Model" developed by Melvin F. Schell, Jr. The premise of the program is based on the observation that the local church is a "cybernetic system." In order to make clear what is meant by this, I will start with a brief description of the developmental history and theory of Cybernetics and then trace the five general components of any system as they relate to the local church.

Seven principles will be delineated as they have been derived from the study of cybernetic systems. It is proposed that these principles must be understood and followed in local church administration if the church is to develop the self-awareness necessary for proper self-governance and growth in all essential areas of its corporate life.

There will be a brief presentation of the program's theological premise and salient understandings of the dynamic operative in the local church. An explanation of how the Total Church Growth Model is introduced and integrated into local church programs is offered.

The term "Cybernetics" comes from the ancient Greek word which translates "good at steering" [kybernetikos]. Its ancient usage was in reference to the "art of helmsmanship,"

or the special ability of one who steers a ship, under the direction of a captain. The term has a history dating from the 19th century, when it was introduced by the French physicist, Andre Marie Ampere. It was a suggested classification for the new science of the control of governments. Norbert Wiener re-coined its uses in 1948. A brilliant mathematician at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he had a highly developed interest in inter-disciplinary studies. He wrote:

Thus, as far back as four years ago, the group of scientists about Dr. Rosenblueth and myself had already become aware of the essential unity of the set of problems centering about the communication, control, and statistical mechanics, whether in the machine or in living tissue. On the other hand, we were seriously hampered by the lack of unity of the literature concerning these problems, and by the absence of any common terminology, or even a single name for the field. After much consideration, we have come to the conclusion that all the existing terminology has too heavy a bias to one side or another to serve the future development of the field as well as it should; and as happens so often to scientists, we have been forced to coin at least one artificial neo-Greek expression to fill the gap. We have decided to call the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal, by the name Cybernetics, which we form from the Greek "kybernetikos" or steersman. In choosing this term we wish to recognize the first significant paper on feedback mechanisms in an article on governors, which was published by Clerk Maxwell in 1868 and that governor is derived from a Latin corruption of *κυβερνησις*

We also wish to refer to the fact that the steering engines of a ship are indeed one of the ¹earliest and best developed forms of feedback mechanisms.

Wiener, because of his ranging interests, was a regu-

¹Norbert Wiener, Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine (New York: Wiley, 1961) 11-12.

lar member of many informal consortiums made up of scientists from fields as diverse as physics, electrical engineering, psychology, biology and medicine. His mathematical expertise was valued, because the participants in these consortiums often sought to codify and quantify their research proposals or findings, using mathematical equations to make them understandable across disciplinary lines. Wiener checked their equations and often suggested new ones which would further facilitate mutual understanding.

As his own understanding of the differing disciplines grew, he became particularly interested in the similarities between the automatic control systems in machines and the nervous system in animals. It became understood that there is a form of "communication" in the processes of the bodily functions of living organisms. Information is sent and received between the brain and the nerve endings in living organisms and controls how these organisms function.

Wiener began to see how insights gained from the study of animal neurological phenomena could be used to develop more sophisticated controls in machinery and the reverse, and he even used some of these insights in work with sociological systems.

He learned that the complexity of these systems could not be overstated. He pointed out that all factors affecting a particular system, both internally and externally, must always be taken into account, because any new combination of

variables introduced into any phase of the planned sequence produced an entirely new set of chain reactions which, in turn, introduced still further reactions ad infinitum. The enormous complexity of such systems led Wiener to do "highly innovative and fundamental work in the construction of rigorous mathematical descriptions of physical process that is subject to random change."²

Wiener's theories concerning cybernetics, which became the term for the phenomena observed in complex systems, developed still further as a result of work he did during World War II. He and others sought to bring together understandings from mathematics, physics, physiology and psychology to solve the problems involved with the development of sophisticated tracking devices which could be incorporated in naval anti-aircraft weaponry.

Many different disciplines were simultaneously advanced because of the work done by this man in the area now called Cybernetics, which, according to Wiener, now includes:

- (1) The Theory of Information and its measurement
- (2) The concept of communication as a statistical problem in which messages not sent play an equal role with messages sent
- (3) The Theory of Statistical Prediction of sequences of events distributed in time

²"Wiener, Norbert," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed. Macropaedia, XIX, 823.

- (4) The theory of apparatus for control and its design and application to servomechanisms
- (5) The theory of apparatus that retains information in a sort of "memory" and that adapts its performance to improve its own efficiency by a sort of "learning" process
- (6) The application of [all these ideas to the understanding of] ³the lower animals and to man and his society.

The insights gained from this ever-expanding field have led many social scientists to a careful re-evaluation of their theories concerning social systems, particularly in the analysis of dysfunction or break-down in those systems.

ELEMENTS OF A CYBERNETIC SYSTEM

The theory of systems is a vast field which cannot possibly be covered here. It is possible, however, to give a brief outline of the components of a system and relate them to the organization and operation of a local church. The inclusion of this outline is beneficial, as it will facilitate the discussion of the "cybernetic system."

There are five components to this system.

Program elements:

Program elements are those features which determine what a system shall do and how the parts of the system need

³Norbert Wiener, "Cybernetics," Encyclopedia Americana (1982) VIII, 364.

to function in order to accomplish the desired results. This component corresponds to a church's GOVERNING BOARD.

The program can be divided into two related parts: the command program - that series of instructions directing the other system elements through a sequence of steps required to complete the desired operation. This "series of instructions" relates to the church's written or assumed STATEMENT OF MISSION.

The process program - that which contains the instructions that tell the system how each step of the operation is performed. (This instruction may contain the information that is required for the decision element described below). These "instructions" relate to the church's written or assumed PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY.

the action elements are those features which move and align material and apply energy. This component corresponds to a church's COMMISSION, WORK AREAS AND TASK FORCES.

The sensing elements are those features which detect and measure a specific property of the processed item and present that measurement in a form upon which the system can act. Measurement (feedback) obtained from the sensors is used to determine if the process is going according to plan and to provide necessary corrective changes. This component corresponds to the church's CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE.

The decision elements are those features which use the information received from the sensors to measure or

evaluate the operation of the system and compare data with information gathered from the process program. (Based on this comparison the decision elements generate instructions to actuate the control elements). This component corresponds to the church's PROGRAM BOARD.

Control elements are those that control the mechanism by which decisions are carried out. This component corresponds to the church's DECISION MAKING PROCESS as it relates to the gathering of information from the congregation and developing responsibility for the decisions, which in turn results in their giving time, talents and financial resources to the share plans of all concerned.

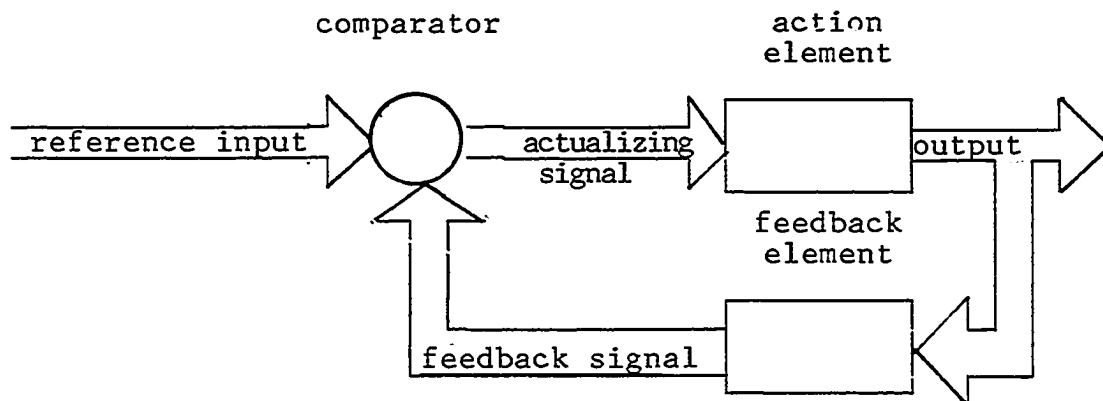
FUNCTIONING OF A CYBERNETIC SYSTEM

A constant flow of communication to and from the nexus of control is essential in the efficient operation of any system.

The principle difficulty in designing an automated system lies in obtaining a complete understanding of each of the action elements and their interactions, and incorporating this information in the program so that proper⁴ decision-making routines will be available as required.

The means by which this communication is transmitted to where it is needed is the use of feedback loops.

Simple Element With Feedback



Simple element with feedback.

An actuating signal on the input of the action element produces an output. A portion of the principle output serves as a signal on the input to the feedback element. The output of the feedback element is fed to the comparator. A reference input from the process program is also fed to the comparator. If the feedback signal differs from the reference input, the difference produces a

⁴Morris Tannenbaum, "Automation," Encyclopaedia Britannica 15th ed. Macropaedia, II, 506.

new actuating signal, and the new actuating signal acting on the action element will produce a new output. This process will continue until the feedback signal matches the reference input, which will occur only when the output has reached the desired value.⁵

The most sophisticated systems (i.e., living organisms) have what is termed "adaptive control:"

Adaptive control is the capability of the system to modify its own operation to achieve the best possible mode of operation. A general definition of adaptive control implies that an adaptive system must be capable of performing the following functions: providing continuous information about the present state of the system or identifying the process; comparing present system performance to the desired or optimum performance and making a decision to change the system to achieve some previously defined optimum performance; and initiating a proper modification to drive the control system to the optimum. These three principles - identification, decision, and modification - are inherent in any system.⁶

A highly developed system will contain a great number of action elements, sensors and control elements. These will be combined with a series of feedback loops, and, under the direction of a complex program, combined with sophisticated decision-making equipment.

All of this provides us with the foundation for a definition of a "cybernetic system."

A CYBERNETIC SYSTEM IS ANY APPARATUS OR ORGANISM WHICH HAS AN INTERNAL ADAPTIVE CONTROL MECHANISM WHICH CAN ASSESS THE FUNCTIONING OF ITS INDIVIDUAL PARTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER AND REGULATE THOSE SEPARATE AND COORDINATED

⁵Ibid.

⁶"Control Systems," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed. Macropaedia, V, 129.

FUNCTIONS TO CORRESPOND WITH THE PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE WHOLE.⁷

To fully appreciate the complexity of a cybernetic system and the sophistication of the adaptive control mechanism necessary to keep the system functioning, it is necessary to see such a system as dynamic and multi-dimensional. Entertain the following illustration: A simple cybernetic system will have all the components and dynamics of a single person playing a basic game of croquet. A more complex cybernetic system might have all the components, dynamics and added dimensions of six persons playing the same basic game of croquet. A cybernetic system similar to those encountered in local churches could have all the components, dynamics and dimensions of the game of croquet described in Alice in Wonderland where the mallets are flamingos; the balls are hedgehogs which quietly unroll and go about their own business; the hoops are playing-card soldiers, likewise subject to locomotor initiative, and the rules are the decrees of the testy, unpredictable Queen of Hearts.

⁷ Author's original definition.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FROM CYBERNETICS

Mel Schell, the originator of the "Total Church Growth" model, has isolated seven principles from Cybernetics and shaped them into principles for understanding his "Total Church model:"

1. We must have current, accurate information about all parts of the model before trying to guide the church in growth.
2. We must be able to send and receive messages in a clear way to all parts of the church system. Messages not sent are as important as those that are sent.
3. Any change in one part of the "Total Church" system affects all other parts of the system.
4. We can predict the future changes within the system through careful attention to the principles of cybernetics.
5. We can more effectively guide the system toward the goal if we have a good way to store and monitor information about the system.
6. We can design sub-systems that produce change within the system if we state precisely what we wish to change, carefully monitor the subsystem, and use a feedback process.
7. When an understanding of the whole system is in place we will see that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.⁸

As these principles, taken as a piece, are incorporated into the mentality of those involved in the decision-making process of the church, the strategies and programs

⁸Mel Schell, "Total Church Growth," (Unpublished paper, 1984)

developed will be wholistic in nature or have an integrity with all the other activities of church life.

A Theological Premise for the Total Church Growth Model

Jesus was once asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" In his reply we see the answer to the age-old question of humankind's purpose on earth, or, more specifically, "What makes one most fully human?" His answer also provides a clue to the purpose of the church. Jesus answered his questioner:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great commandment. And the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

This "Great Commandment" is the first principle underlying the Total Church Growth Model.

The second principle which serves to inform the Model is found in the words of Jesus which he spoke to his disciples as he neared the completion of his earthly ministry. This principle has come to be called the "Great Commission."

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.⁹

The third principle active in the Total Church Growth Model was articulated by our Lord following the Apostle Peter's bold declaration that Jesus was the "Christ, the Son

⁹Matthew, 22:37-38. RSV.

¹⁰Matthew 28:18-20. RSV.

of the living God." In this verse Jesus declared, ". . . I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."¹¹ Some scholars have termed this principle the "Great Compulsion."

These three Scriptural principles form the theological premise and external directives for all activity in the Total Church Growth Model. It is suggested that because Humankind is no longer willing to carry out the Great Commandment, aside from first experiencing the re-creating grace of God and the fellowship of other persons who have experienced this grace. Jesus began building His church. The church is a "place," if you will, where human beings can experience and experiment with the idea of being fully human as they are loved by God and as they love one another. Because loving is an inclusive choice, persons outside our most immediate spheres of influence are to be sought that they, too, might become part of the New Humanity, which is beginning to manifest itself in and through the church.

From the Great Compulsion we see that the church is to understand that God is determined that His Church will grow - in spite of enormous opposition. That compelling power drove the early church to seek the lost. The Apostle Paul wrote:

For the love of Christ impells us and brings us to this conclusion, One died for all, so they all died, and He died for all so that all who live may no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose for them.¹²

¹¹Matthew 16-18. RSV.

¹²II Corinthians 5:14-15. Berkely Version.

It is the premise of the Total Church Growth Model that the Great Commandment is carried out and brought to fulfillment in the carrying out of the Great Commission and that God's Great Compulsion is the church's motivating power.

Operating Premises

Those persons who are encountered by those already "chosen," the church, are to be brought to a "saving," "redeeming," "reconciling" relationship with God by their inclusion in the Family of God through baptism (a more comprehensive meaning than the simple initiation rite presently associated with the term) and instructed in the dynamics of this new way of being human - obedience.

From start to finish, the work of the church is understood to be symbiotic and synergistic with the work of God. The work of the church is the "building of the church" which Jesus said He would do. In this light, at least four influences have been identified in this symbiotic relationship.

The presence of God in three persons, Father, Spirit and Son. People can know God indirectly from the standpoint of culture and community and directly through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The connection that local churches have with other organizations or Denominational structures.

Bible beliefs and practices bear on all areas of the church and must be addressed in order to understand the Total Church.

Evil (both human and Satanic). Through various direct and indirect ways sin hinders the growth of the church.

The Total Church Growth Model takes the above as the program for the church - universal and local.

For the church to be truly faithful, it must be continually growing. This growth is to be understood in at least three dimensions:

Internally or that growth which happens in and among those within the Body of Christ which results in their spiritual maturation. This growth extends to the winning and discipling of children of Christians and the revival of those who have grown cold in their faith.

Externally or that growth which occurs when believers move out into the world, win people to Christ and bring them into church membership in their own local congregations. It results in membership growth of the local assembly.¹³

Operationally or that growth which happens as the church expands and adapts its operational center to accommodate the numerical increase in the church and the complexity of the organism this increase has caused.

Four categories of persons to be discipled and perfected are addressed in this Model:

Confident, involved Christians are persons who are experiencing a vital relationship with God and are active and committed to a local church through membership.

Nominal Church Members are those persons who are on the membership roll of a local church but for one reason or another are not experiencing a vital or meaningful relationship with God.

Confident, Non-involved Christians are persons who are experiencing a vital relationship with God but for one reason or another are not committed to a local church.

Non-Christians are those persons who are not experiencing a vital relationship with Christ and have no commitment to a local church.

Respectively, these four categories represent the following subdivisions of Internal and External Growth:

INTERNAL - Discipleship Growth. These persons need to develop their gifts for service, and to deepen their understanding of the implications of the Gospel.

¹³C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow (Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, 1971) 93.

INTERNAL - Renewal Growth. These persons need to come to significant commitment and correspondent understanding of the implications of the Gospel.

EXTERNAL - Transfer Growth. These persons need to be churched in order to experience Discipleship Growth.

EXTERNAL - Conversion Growth. These persons need to "receive Christ" and be churched. Discipleship growth will then need to follow.

EXTERNAL - Expansion Growth. These persons live beyond the immediate reach of any congregation. They would be considered subjects for Missionary work sponsored by the local church.

It should be understood that real persons in these five categories will be placed somewhere on a receptivity or resistance scale in their respective growth postures. Each must be approached according to his/her receptivity/resistance posture and category.

Persons must cross two barriers in order to experience the type of growth they need:

The Certainty of Salvation Barrier, which is the spiritual ambiguity persons experience when they are not in vital union with God or when they do not understand the Gospel clearly enough to have confidence in their relationship to God. This barrier keeps them in a spiritual malaise which makes it difficult to mature and renders them ineffective to help the advancement of the church.

Acquaintance Barrier, which is that sense of sociological exclusion some persons experience as they would attempt to associate with a person or group of persons. This felt exclusion may stem from something as minor as the unfamiliarity with another's name to major differences stemming from racial, cultural or linguistic dissimilarities.

It is an objective of the Total Church Growth Model to make persons aware of these barriers and to illustrate ways in which they might be removed or bridged. The strate-

gies and programs for doing so are worked out in the church through the six sociological groups found in healthy churches:

EXPLANATION OF THE SIX TYPES OF CHURCH GROUPS

1. The Membership Group: These are the people who have formally committed themselves to the local church. They have a need to be recognized as part of the church. Members may be resident or non-resident, active or inactive. There are no size limits.

The Five Basic Subgroups of the Membership Group

2. The Worship Groups: These are celebration - or worship-oriented. Their focus is on God, and as such there are no size restrictions (other than the limits of available facilities).
3. The Fellowship or Subcongregational Groups: These satisfy fellowship needs. They depend on the groups being both large enough to provide fellowship dynamics and small enough to allow each member to know at least half of the other members by name. Ideal size is between 30 and 100.

In smaller churches, the worship group can also be a fellowship group. In fact, fellowship groups can take many forms, such as Bible study, Sunday School, choir, men's fellowship or youth groups.

4. The Kinship or Cell Groups: These meet the more intimate needs that people have for trust and close family-like relationships. The ideal size is four to twelve. They, too, can focus on any of a variety of activities such as prayer, Bible study, music or personal sharing. Meeting time, place and style is important to their meeting the kinship need.
5. The Apprenticeship or Discipling Relationship Group: These are the smallest groups in the church. They meet the need for skills development in the "how to's" of the Christian life, and allow for the deepest kind of discipleship or life change. The concept: one skilled person teaches a less skilled person how to witness, teach, pray, lead, sing or just live the Christian life. These groups work best with only two or three persons.

6. The Stewardship or Operational Center Groups: These meet the administrative needs of the local church. They act as stewards over the church's people, money, time and facilities. They include boards, committees and staff, and those reporting to them.

There is no ideal size for the stewardship groups, but leaders are scarce resources and should be employed wisely. Each of the church groups we have outlined above requires at least one leader related to the operational center. Thus, the smaller groups like cells and discipling relationship groups are much more costly in terms of leaders, while the larger groups are more costly in terms of facilities and operating expense.

Intention of the Total Church Growth Model

It is the intention of the "Total Church Growth Model" to assist the local church in installing an apparatus which will make it possible for leaders to constantly assess, regulate, and coordinate the separate programs and support systems so that all work together to achieve the stated objectives.

This "adaptive control" apparatus makes communication between leaders and congregation possible, so that mutually agreed-upon programs and procedures can be assessed and related to other programs in terms of complementing or supplementing each other. Needed course corrections can be made as they appear.

The "adaptive control" apparatus is not mechanical, but, rather attitudinal and social. It is a pre-determined mentality or way of seeing the church and a method of operation for the whole organization.

The congregation's attitudinal apparatus will be developed as members are made aware of principles for efficient church management. The congregation's productivity will be heightened as Total Church Growth principles are introduced.

The congregation's social apparatus will be developed as it gains insight into its present organizational structures and is given tools to comprehend and evaluate the status of every individual function in the church in light of the above mentioned principles.

This detailed "programming" of the attitudinal and social control apparatus will enable the church to carry out its task of maintaining equilibrium and initiating strategic changes so that the church may move toward its objectives efficiently and quickly.

THE PROCESS

The Total Church Growth Model is a program which seeks to direct a congregation through a process designed to produce growth in their church. The process is one of self-discovery, analysis, goal-setting, equipping and implementation. It is designed to develop over a three-year period. Because the emphasis is on Total Church Growth, the focus is three dimensional: Internal Growth, External Growth and Operational Growth.

A Church Growth Consultant is retained for the purpose of guiding the process, instructing the leaders, giving objective analyses, leading congregational seminars and providing spiritual motivation.

The Consultant, along with the Church leaders, selects a Church Growth Steering Committee who will, under the supervision of the Consultant, direct the process and schedule and convene the workshops and seminars in which the congregation is taught the many important Church Growth strategies and principles. It is the Steering Committee's responsibility to "track" the process of the program and to hold the data gathered and present it to the Administrative Board when appropriate.

The Steering Committee, along with the church leaders, selects chairpersons and membership for three Task Forces: Internal Growth, External Growth and Operational Growth. Each Task Force is responsible for gathering and analyzing data in its program area and for making recommendations to the Administration and the larger congregation as to policies, strategies and programs which they think will produce growth for the congregation - individually and corporately.

Persons agreeing to serve on the various Task Forces are given workbooks and instruction by the Consultant and are set to work. Periodic "check-ins" by the Consultant are made to keep the work moving, to answer questions and to give guidance.

The Steering Committee is responsible for planning dates for the workshops and seminars which are conducted at various times throughout the process. The Committee is also thoroughly schooled in the details of the Total Church Growth Model so that they are equipped to explain the process to larger and larger segments of the congregation.

The seminars are designed to involve large segments of the congregation for brief periods of time. The purpose is to expose them to Church Growth principles and to other consciousness-raising experiences which will help them understand "why" and "how" churches grow and "what" their congregation must do to experience growth and overall spiritual health and vitality. At least two or three of these "high visibility events" are held each year over the course of the three-year process.

Following the data-gathering and analysis phase, but prior to the commencement of the goal-setting phase, a special seminar/workshop is held, often in a retreat setting. The purpose of this all-congregational event is to establish a Statement of Mission/Philosophy of Ministry which will become the direction-setting instrument for all future planning. The Statement of Mission will show this particular congregation what their objectives will be. A Philosophy is a statement of "how" the congregation is to do what it does. (i.e., If a congregation decides ". . . to make a reality of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of every believer,"

its Philosophy of Ministry concerning lay leadership will perhaps be that "Lay persons shall do the ministry of pastoral care and nurture," while the Professional Clergy will give their time and energies to "equipping the saints for the work of service.")

The Task Forces, having formed their recommendations with the intention of carrying out the objectives implicit in the Statement of Mission, present these recommendations to the church's governing board for its approval.

Subsequent to Board approval of the recommendation, "Equipping Seminars" are held in the needed areas. As the name implies, these seminars are "how to" events which focus on particular needs raised by the recommendations. (For instance, if "The External Task Force recommends that the congregation engage in an evangelism program to reach into the "kinship circles" of its members for the recruitment of new members through conversion growth," a seminar would be offered which would inform and instruct interested persons on just what is meant by kinship circles and how evangelism is done among them. The same might occur if it is recommended that small groups be formed to provide "heart-to-heart" caring fellowship for spiritual support of new Christians, or Adult Bible Classes for those interested in becoming Bible teachers, or Spiritual Gifts deployment among lay leaders.)

As persons are trained for leadership through these seminars, pilot programs will be started. If the interest is

sufficient, the entire congregation will be engaged in the suggested programs. The Steering Committee will have directed all of this through proper work areas and existing committees, wherever possible. Where new program structures are necessary, the Church Growth Committee will seek to have the governing board form such structures.

Crucial to this Implementation Phase will be the establishment of "feedback systems" to track progress toward meeting designated objectives and goals. Additional attention will be given to how new and existing programs are affecting other programs and activities of the total church life, keeping in mind that the church is a "cybernetic System." Important to the continued growth of the congregation will be an adaptive control mechanism for information concerning separate programs and decisions affecting the life of the entire congregation.

The Church Growth Consultant's will is not to be superimposed on the program development of the local church. It is the responsibility of the congregation to decide, from the data gathered and their own understanding of Church Growth Principles, the directions and details of strategy and program for their church in its ministry.

CHAPTER V

FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS (CASE STUDIES)

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of field research conducted on five United Methodist Churches in the greater Atlanta, Georgia, area. These churches were members of a district which participated in a pilot program for church growth using the Total Church Growth Model.

The five churches chosen for this research met the following criteria:

- (1) They had completed the "Total Church Growth" model's process (outlined in the previous chapter).
- (2) The pastor, presently serving, served during the church's involvement in the process.
- (3) The size and location of the church chosen would help to make up a grouping that represented a cross-section which represented churches on the theological spectrum as well.

It was just chance that the churches chosen were the only ones with the same pastors in charge as when the programs were conducted. The selection, however, still represents a random sampling.

It was recognized and suggested by the participants in these churches that, to a greater or lesser degree, the results of the program were also influenced by factors separate from the program itself;

- (1) The degree to which the church actually followed the program and its process.

- (2) The internal and external circumstances the church found itself involved in at the time of the program's initiation.
- (3) The dynamics between the congregation and the consultant of record. (The consultant of record was from the Atlanta area and should not be confused with the present writer.)

The research data were gathered through a series of group and individual interviews with persons who had served on the Church Growth Committees of their respective churches and with the pastors of those churches. All the interviews were video-taped with the participants' permission. Each interview was conducted with the same set of questions, which the participants had been given prior to the interview.¹ The interviewees were instructed to answer candidly and were encouraged to speak for themselves and those affected by the program as a whole.

The purpose of the questions was to gain insight in several areas:

- (1) The starting point of the congregation as they were engaged in the program.
- (2) The congregation's evaluation of the process itself.
- (3) The results of the program relative to growth and change for the church.

While all interviews were video-taped,² only the edited written verbatims of the interviews conducted with

¹See Appendix A.

²See Appendix C.

the committee and pastor of Campground United Methodist Church³ are included. The actual unedited video-tapes of all the interviews are stored with the library copy of this project.⁴

Following is a review of each of the five churches included in this project:

³See Appendix B.

⁴The School of Theology at Claremont.

CAMPGROUND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2325 Roswell Road N.E.

Marietta, Georgia 30062

Phone: 404-971-3643

Pastor: James W. Thurman, Jr.

Campground United Methodist Church is a congregation that pre-dates the Civil War. The church gets its name from the historic campground located across the highway from it. An average size church, Campground has quite a history, but for many decades the congregation was, as some have termed it, a "sleeper." Its physical setting told a story. When coming from the west, one first saw the Campgrounds to the south of the church - old, rustic buildings sprawling over about fifty acres. Immediately before the church, actually blocking the initial view of the church, is the church cemetery. The church sits back from the road in a hollow in a random cluster of low profile buildings. The seven or so acres are quite wooded.

The pastor, "Jimmy" Thurman, had served the church for about seven years. He is a committed, caring, able pastor with good rapport with his congregation. Things were "status quo" when he arrived as a mid-year appointment. The church had been involved in some mission projects outside of their congregation but were beginning to look for something to do to make something happen in the church.

The congregation had begun plans for a new sanctuary, which would seat approximately 1,500. Building plans had been drawn up, but the congregation was not growing. The community was changing around them.

The pastor and congregation had some intuition as to the direction the church should go, but much was still uncertain.

The program of the church was minimal. There was little space for adult classes; so there was only one, and attendance was low. Little evangelistic outreach was attempted. The sanctuary was more than eighty percent full, which helped create satisfaction with the way things were.

The pastor and key laity were invited to several Church Growth Seminars and finally introduced to the Total Church Growth Model. The decision was made. They got involved. Ninety percent of the congregation filled out a lengthy questionnaire. Twenty to twenty five people served on the various committees and task forces. Many who had been on the fringes of the church's life were asked for their input. The congregation took a hard look. After 1,900 work hours of committee work, seminars and workshops, a Church Growth Priority Plan was presented to the congregation as a whole, and the recommendations, about seventeen in all, were approved. Listed below, in approximately the order of importance to the congregation, are the results of the congregation's involvement with the Total Church Growth Model:

1. Over one hundred adults have become involved in a weekly, two-year, through-the-Bible study (Bethel Bible Study). The congregation had discovered that sixty-seven percent of its members felt they were Biblically illiterate. Seventeen lay people have taken the leadership training course to qualify themselves to teach this class or to teach classes which relate to the Bible. Seven others have, at their own expense, gone to Madison, Wisconsin, for a week-long training class in leadership and teaching.

2. The plans to build the 1,500 seat auditorium have been set aside. The present sanctuary was remodeled to provide a more attractive worship setting and additional seating. The church now has two worship services.

3. A \$600,000 Adult Education building is presently being built.

4. The pastor and laity now do "intentional ministry programming" with conscious attention to the needs of the congregation and those in the community.

5. Training in several evangelism programs has begun.

6. New informed leadership has emerged.

7. The church has opened its facilities to community clubs and organizations such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, AA, Weight Watchers and aerobics classes.

8. The church's grounds have been landscaped to give passers-by a better view of the church's facilities, which include a beautiful gym (previously hidden from view

because of large pine trees). A large, lighted sign stands out prominently for all to see (calling attention away from the "campgrounds").

9. While the church has deliberately purged its rolls of over 170 inactive members, its over-all membership has remained at approximately 560. One committee member commented, "We have a whole new congregation, much more actively involved and reaching out."

10. A new sense of "being alive," "going places," "being the church that God wants us to be," is sensed by those who attend.

11. Many of the new members are families with young and teenage children.

12. Financial commitments have risen.

Over all, this church appears to have done it right. They boasted of following the program "to the letter." They prided themselves on "getting their money's worth" from the consultant. A parting comment made to the interviewer was quite satisfying, "We may have done some of what we have done without the Total Church Growth Program, but we seriously doubt it."

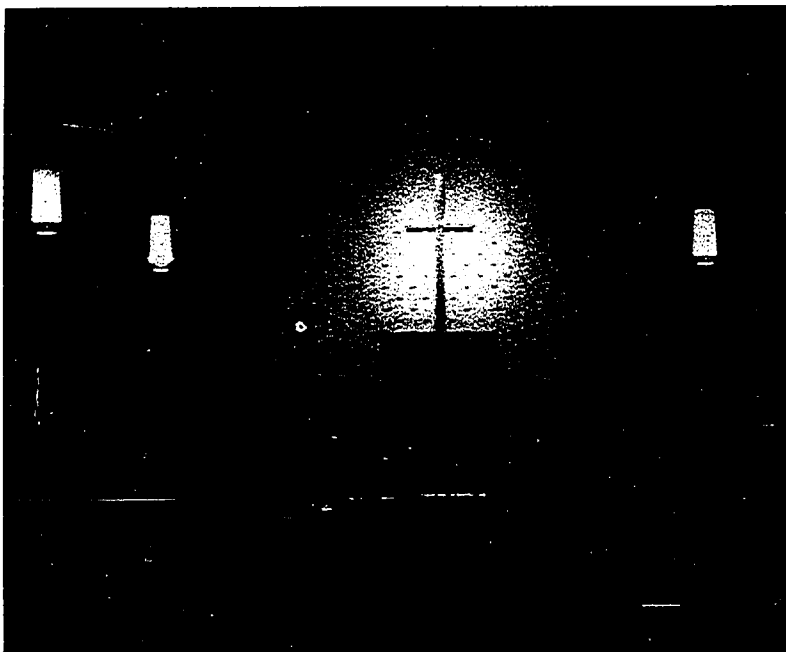


106

Campground
United Methodist
Church
Beautifully situated
in tall stately
Georgia pines



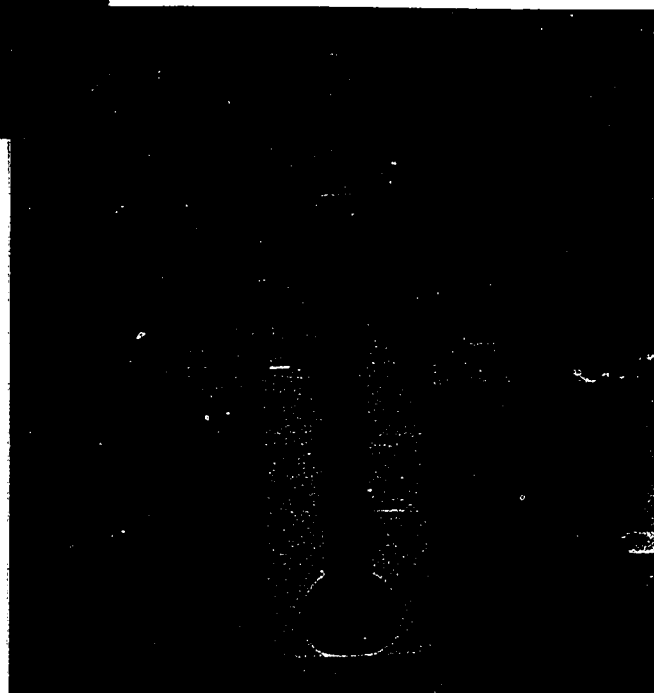
Across the highway
is the historical
Methodist campground
still in use after
150 years
The campground has
attracted thousands



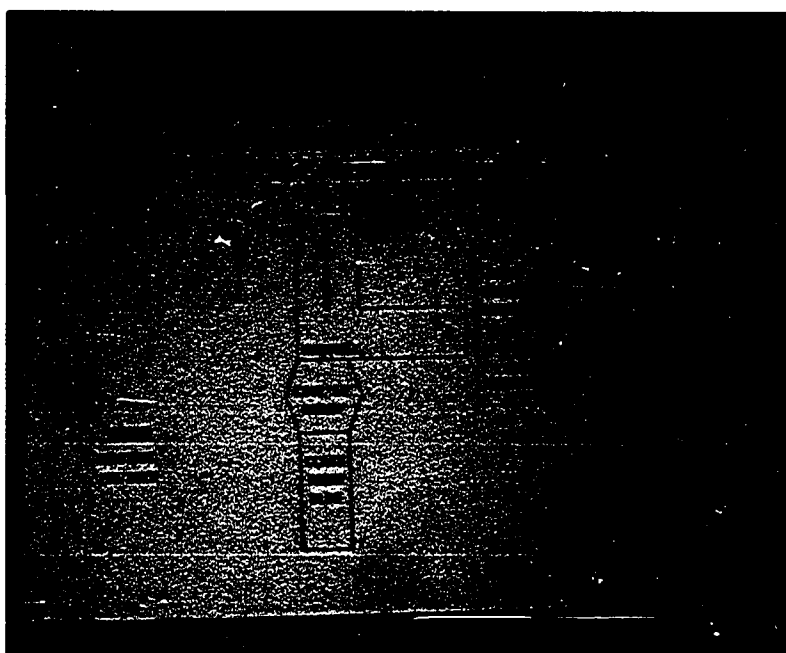
107

Inside
a recently remodeled
sanctuary
is inviting and
comodious

Reaching goals
has been exciting



Funds are now being
raised for
a \$600,000
Education addition



SAINT STEPHEN'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

636 Roswell Street

Marietta, Georgia 30060

Phone: 404- -

Pastor: Richard Harris

Saint Stephen's United Methodist Church is a thirty-year-old congregation on a main street of this town of about 70,000. There are several other United Methodist Churches, all larger, in the same town. The First United Methodist Church, within a mile of Saint Stephen's has a membership of approximately 3,000. Saint Stephen's membership roll says it is a congregation of 400. Its active membership is between 150 and 200. The demographics on the congregation indicate that members come to the church from a distance of up to 25 miles. This situation does not exist, so the leaders say, because persons have moved from the neighborhoods surrounding the church to those distances, but rather that these persons simply found their church and started to attend from those distances. The pastor pointed out that on a number of occasions he has taken informal censuses to determine the number of new members added in the last five years. He estimated that one-third to one-half of those present were, in fact, in that category. Nevertheless, the congregation had been declining for over ten years.

Prior to the church's involvement with the "Total

Church Growth" program, leaders and pastor admitted the church had a "low" and "negative" self-image and "didn't have a sense of mission or purpose." Their involvement with the program, through the district, came because "something had to be done," and the program offered appeared to be the right vehicle. Some of the low self-esteem and negative feelings admittedly came from the fact that the church sits in the morning shadow of the largest Baptist church in the Southeast (Roswell Street Baptist Church, with its membership of 5,000, two blocks to the east). It was revealed that this church started at about the same time as Saint Stephen's and was still growing, while Saint Stephen's was declining. There was also great concern that people came to the church in considerable numbers but either did not return or soon left. The turn-over was a great mystery to the congregation.

It is somewhat difficult to evaluate the actual benefits of the program for this church or to pin-point the factors involved. The pastor, while initially supporting the church's involvement in the program, admitted abandoning the follow-through on many of the recommendations of the congregation's Growth Task Forces, claiming that "Lay-people don't know what they really need." He claimed that they "simply wanted more and better of what they already had." The Church Growth chairperson rather strongly stated, "We just didn't do a lot of what the consultant recommended."

Many of the recommendations presented to the congregation for implementation came from data gathered from the congregation by the questionnaire. The questionnaire used in Atlanta came under considerable criticism because some of the United Methodist congregations felt its "slant" was "too theologically conservative." Those interviewed at Saint Stephen's felt the questionnaire was just fine and that questions which apparently concerned some people, such as those relative to the "certainty of salvation" issue made perfect sense. Committee persons asked rather, "What else is more important?" and "Why would people be bothered about something that important." Incidentally, forty percent of this congregation answered that they did not presently experience a certainty of their salvation.

The committee expressed these feelings concerning the results of the program:

1. Heightened awareness and sensitivity concerning Church Growth and a desire on the part of as much as twenty percent of the active congregation to grow.
2. A slight upturn in membership after a ten-year decline.
3. Several short-term Bible and small group studies begun to address the issue of salvation.
4. A short-lived visitation program.
5. A re-thinking of the staffing of the church. It was discovered that laypersons could be used in the youth

ministry, and money budgeted there was directed to a live-on-the-premises Custodial family. This normally would not be considered a "growth posture," but it did address the problem of declining state of the buildings and grounds (which was mentioned in the list of recommendations).

6. A number of social programs were initiated. While the pastor was reluctant to credit the Church Growth program with this change, it did reflect a gained awareness that the existing programs were not meeting the needs of those in the immediate neighborhood and those coming through the neighborhood.

7. There was a shift in attitude concerning the fact that the church was not growing, even though it accepted many new members. The pastor and other leaders had a better sense of where the people were going when they left the church. Persons who, prior to joining Saint Stephen's, had little or no formal relationship to a local church, upon relocating away from Saint Stephen's, requested a transfer of membership. Nearly all persons physically moving from the area had, in fact, requested membership be transferred to their new church. This indicated to the pastor, and gave significant hope to the leaders, that real growth had, indeed, occurred in these people as a result of their short affiliation with Saint Stephen's

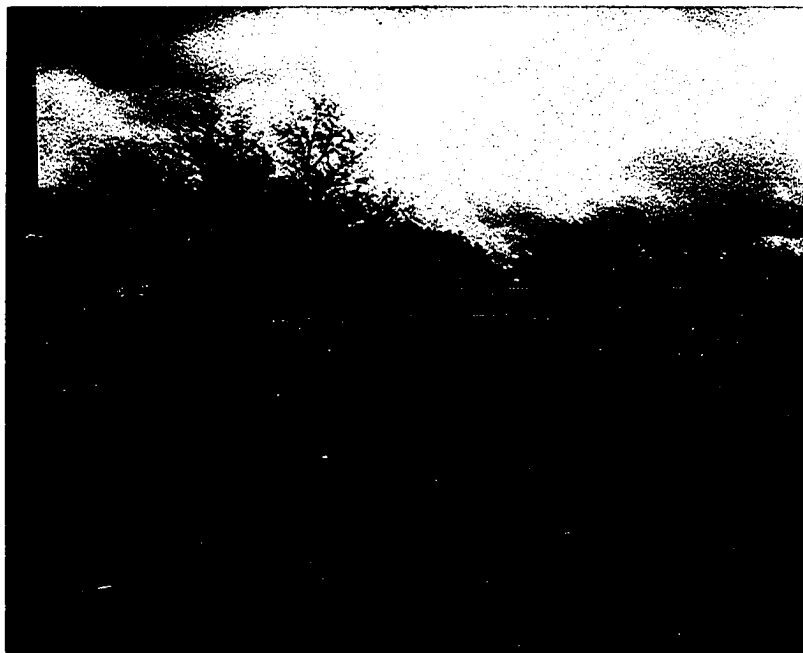
The congregation continues to experience at least

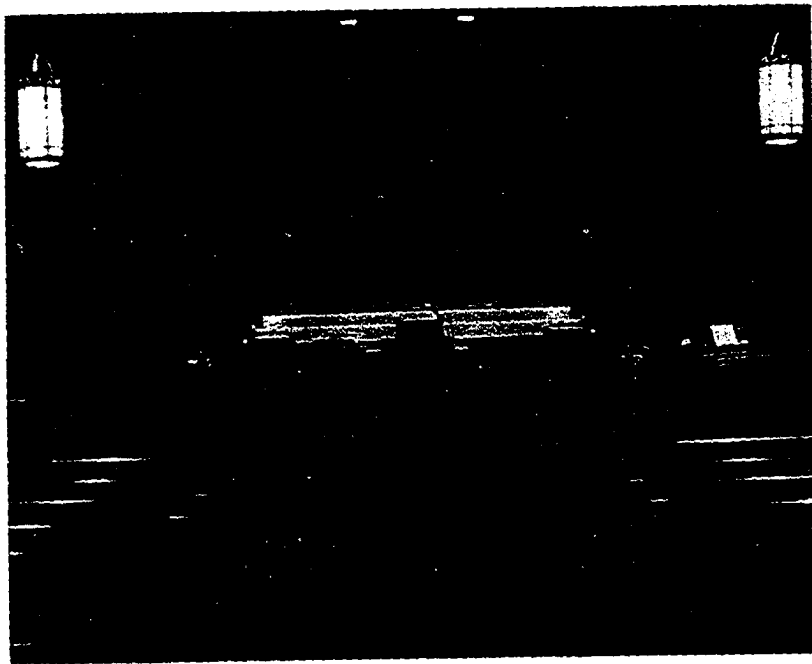
one major impediment to growth: in Church Growth terminology, "sociological strangulation." Their buildings very inadequately accommodate even those presently attending and restrict the development of on-premise fellowship activities and adult educational opportunities. The worshipping community will most likely remain the same size. The ministry of the church may expand to touch those in the surrounding community, but only marginally, as those persons in the community are not the same as those presently worshipping, and there is no on-going attempt to build bridges to them.

Perhaps the greatest benefit gained from the church's involvement is an increased awareness and appreciation of the fact that the congregation likes an informal, non-threatening atmosphere, and that this climate is producing a "door of entry" into the Church Universal for many who, otherwise, would never come in. Even though these people stay at Saint Stephen's for only a short time, they do stay in the Church to increase its numbers overall.

11:3

Saint Stephen's
United Methodist Church
Simple neighborhood church



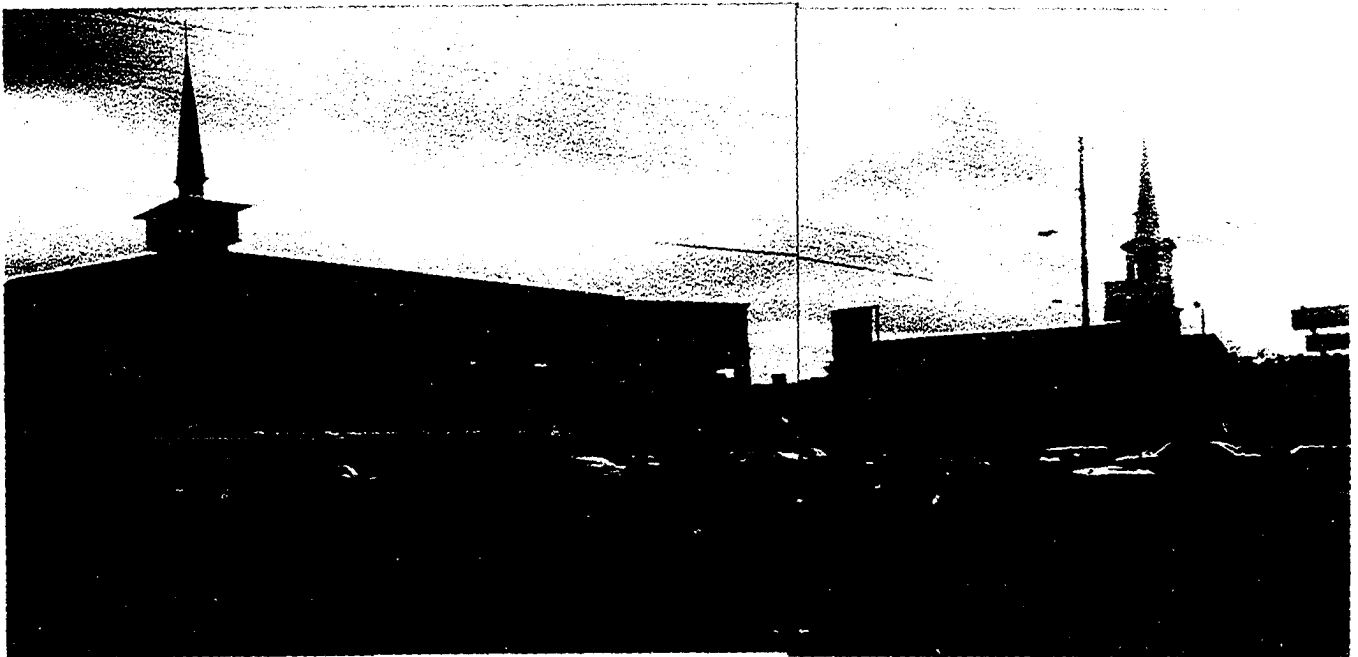


114

Inside . . .
Flooded with
warm light
honey-colored woods
invite
worshippers to
quiet contemplation

Georgia's Largest Baptist Church -

two blocks down the street



POWDER SPRINGS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4329 Marietta Street

Powder Springs, Georgia 30073

Phone: 404-943-5130

Pastor: "Woody" Spackman

Powder Springs United Methodist Church is a congregation founded in the 1840's. The present church is located about twenty miles southwest of downtown Atlanta, Georgia. The church has a membership of just over 430 (forty-six percent retired). The actual worship attendance presently runs around 180. The sanctuary, at the present time, seats a capacity crowd.

At the time of the interview, the pastor, "Woody" Spackman, had served the church for two and a half years. Prior to becoming involved with the Total Church Growth program, the church had experienced a very difficult time with issues not disclosed, but which had fragmented the congregation. The pastor stated that attendance at worship services, at the time of his coming, had averaged forty. The attitude of the congregation was at a low ebb, and a good self-image was lacking. Programming was at a stand-still. The church's facilities were badly in need of repair. Current expenses were about \$6,000 in arrears. Only the pastor and a small number of the congregation's leaders saw the potential for growth which the surrounding community offered.

The pastor had begun to involve the congregation in small attempts to rebuild its self-confidence and self-image. Over the several years of the present pastor's leadership the buildings had been renovated.

The church became involved in the Church Growth program as a result of the District Superintendent's invitation. There were initial and continued negative feelings over the financial cost of the church's involvement in the program, although the congregation had voluntarily joined the program and was receiving financial assistance in the form of a grant from the District. The congregation chose to enter the program at the district cluster arrangement. This means that their commitment was not to the level that a consultant would work with them individually, but rather that they would participate with several other churches in district workshops only. The Church Growth Consultant did visit the church twice. This was the minimal level of involvement, which was one of the options congregations were offered. The congregation also chose, for financial reasons, they said, to drop their formal involvement in the process after the diagnosis and analysis stages. They did, however, develop a Church Growth Priority Plan on their own, which included recommendations made by the committee, based on the data gathered and analyzed with the help of the consultant.

The Church Growth Committee numbered about ten. It was noted, however, that spouses of committee members became

involved also. The committee admitted that one weakness of their involvement with the program was their failure to involve more of the congregation in the process of decision-making regarding the recommendations.

Something unique to this congregation was their response to the consultant of record. He was perceived as "high pressure," "too smooth" and "IBM-ish." They would have preferred him to be more "homefolk." The overall feelings of those interviewed was that the program did not reach their level of expectation. Interestingly enough, as the video-tape shows, they made some discoveries about themselves, even as the interview progressed.

The following results were recognized:

1. While interest in church growth was at a relatively low level (45% not wanting the church to grow), a new group (about 20%) now saw the possibilities for growth and were working towards it.
2. The congregation began to grow at about seven percent annually during the program and immediately afterward.
3. Because of the survey, the congregation had recognized giving potential far above what they had originally thought possible, and a financial campaign netted a good increase during the following several years.
4. The congregation admitted in the survey that forty-four percent did not have a certainty of their

Salvation. Some felt that this large number reflected the theological bias of the survey. Nevertheless, these data have continued to influence the sermons of the pastor and the content of several small group programs which, at this time, seem to be permanent.

5. The congregation is presently involved in a mission program outside their own church, which was begun as a recommendation of the Church Growth Committee.

6. Two young adult Sunday morning Bible classes flourish. These were begun as a result of principles learned in the Church Growth Workshop connected with the program.

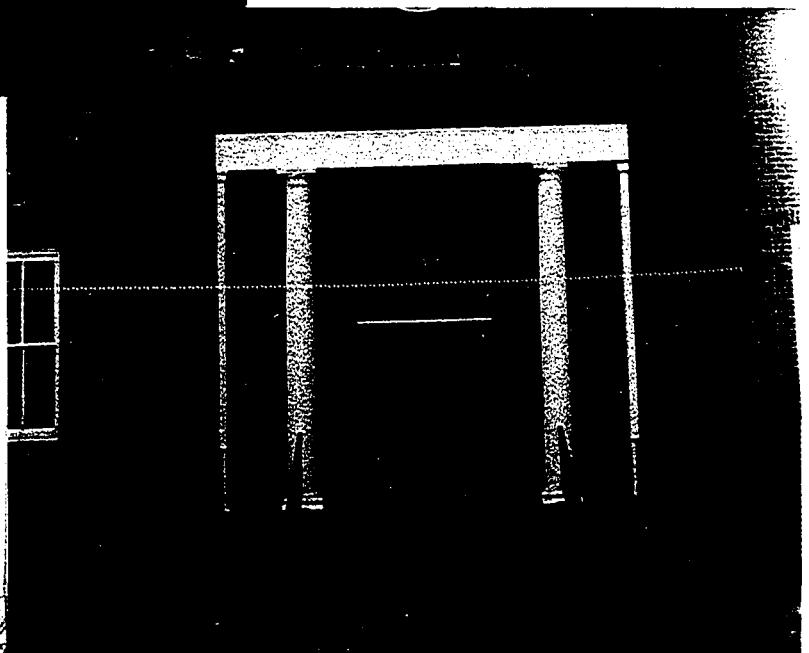
7. The members of the Church Growth Committee felt they had experienced personal spiritual growth and that others in leadership now used Church Growth insight in planning programs for their church.

As the interview concluded, a different attitude concerning the results of the program could be noted. While the results were still below their expectations, it was admitted that they "had expected a miracle." Considering the starting point of the church, those interviewed were beginning to ask themselves if they didn't, indeed, have something to celebrate.

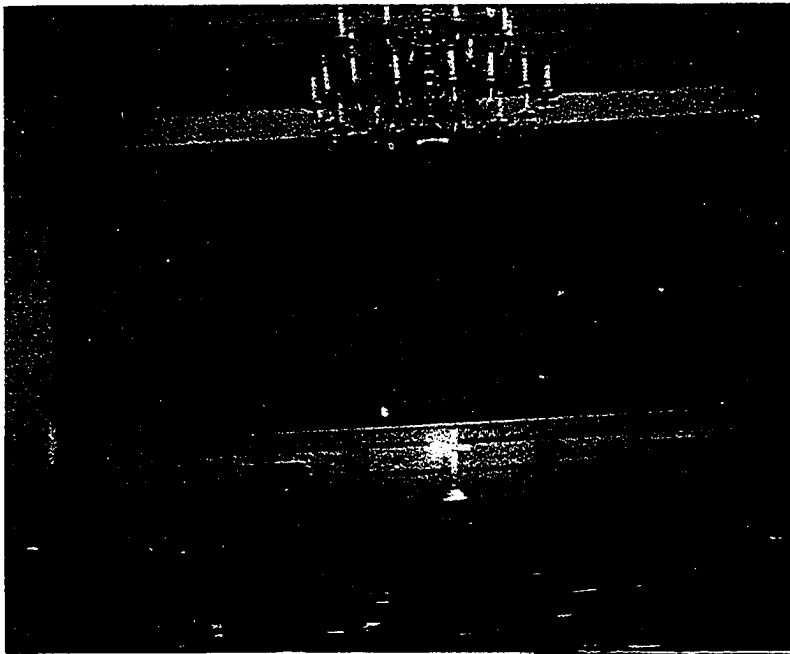


Powder Springs
United Methodist
Nearly 100 years old
the simple red brick
structure

With its friendly entrance
it invites . . .



Family Life Center
also houses
church offices



120

Inside . . .
the simplicity
continues . . .

A quiet street
in a town
beginning to grow . . .



Powder Springs
United Methodist Church

. . . thankful

GRIFFIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

P. O. Box 595

Griffin, Georgia 30224

Phone: 404-228-3020

Pastor: Owen Kellum

Griffin United Methodist Church is perhaps the most imposing of the churches involved, with its sprawling plant of Georgia red brick buildings and beautiful stained glass windows. The circular drive to the church from the road is several hundred yards long. The front lawn would be large enough for a professional football field. The interviews were held in the "parlor," - a marvelous room with fireplace, antique settees, Queen Anne wing chairs, and crystal-prismed chandeliers. In stereotypical "Southern Style" comfort, we sat to discuss their experiences with the Total Church Growth program.

The pastor of this multiple-stage church, Owen Kellum, is a refined, well-educated Southern Gentleman, slightly reserved in his interaction. The pastoral interview was enhanced by the presence of "Gus" Gustafson, the author of the popular book, But I'm Just a Layman! Mr. Gustafson was the Chair of the Church Growth Committee. Griffin United Methodist Church entered the Total Church Growth program with the "congregation doing pretty good." Since the coming of the pastor, attendance had been increasing, and the church seemed

to be on the move. Younger families were not coming. "We are a church in the process of becoming old," said Rev. Kelum. The church appeared to be "moneyed." The pastor was quick to point out that, by some standards, this would be true, but in churches as large as Griffin (1850 members), just a small portion were wealthy and gave substantial support to the church. Attendance averaged about 800.

The church "was not penetrating the community as it should," but their sense of mission was "growing." Some of the laypersons saw some potential for growth, while others pointed out that the town, forty miles south of Atlanta, was only growing by one percent annually. Economic hard times had depressed the area somewhat. Some of the congregation wondered, "Why worry about growth?" Deep concern was expressed that people should grow spiritually and know Christ personally. Several members of the Growth Committee were considered to be "evangelists" by those who knew their efforts and concern for "the lost."

This particular congregation was "one of the first" to become involved in the district program. They experienced some frustration with the problems of a "pilot" program. Nevertheless, a core of about twelve to eighteen laypersons worked for over a year on the Church Growth Task Forces and "followed the plan to the letter," making adjustments for their size and style. One noted exception, which they ad-

mitted came back to haunt them, was that they resisted and finally failed to do a systematic community analysis. One almost got the impression that many did not really want to know just how many people in the area really were unchurched. This is mentioned because there was, in the interview, some tension concerning whether everything was done to reach persons outside the church or those members who had stopped attending. There was some concern, as well, that more than a relatively small percentage of the members were not involved in the overall Church Growth program.

The results, notwithstanding some expressed disappointment with their ability to "get more people involved," are these:

1. A developed sensitivity to the diverse theological beliefs and religious experiences of members. Along with this was an enlightenment concerning the "homogeneous unit principle." What this enlightenment consisted of was not made clear, but there appeared to be a relaxing of tensions that the church was not "all things to all people." Their definition of homogeneous, for the most part, did extend beyond racial lines and perhaps centered on individual value systems and particularly religious sensibilities and practices.
2. The church was beginning to develop a sense of Mission with "positive enthusiasm for outreach in the community and for involve-

ment in the church's programs and its mission."

3. An evangelism program was refined to include a policy of visiting new-comers in the first 48 hours after their attendance at worship.

4. A "Church Visitor" was hired for twenty hours a week. It was pointed out that this was the highest item on the priority plan and that the money for salary came from outside the budget from persons on the Church Growth Committee.

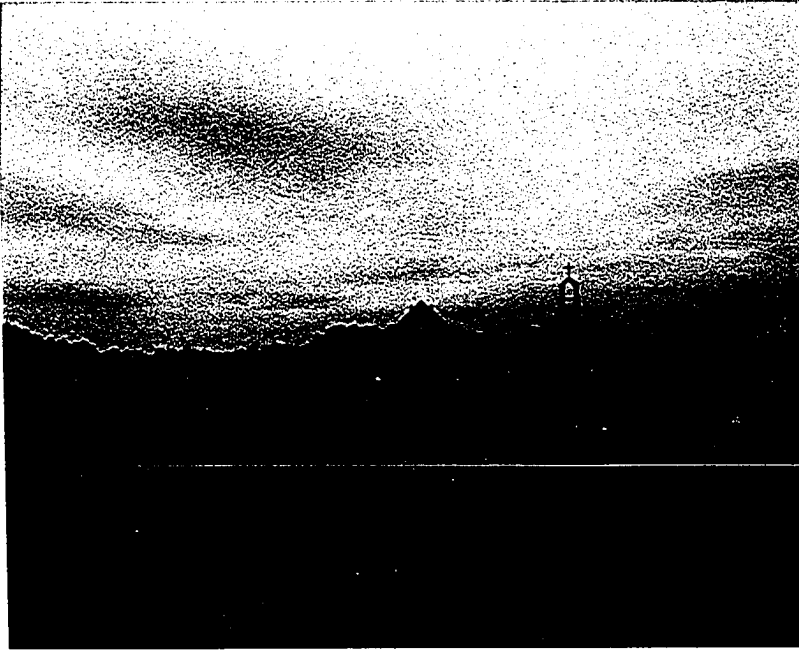
5. The Small Group Program, which had existed for about ten years with two or three groups, expanded to fourteen groups with about eighty persons involved. It was predicted that the number would soon increase to one hundred. An awareness of the need for the small group dynamic in a church was extended to the Church School program, and several classes began to experience deeper intimacy among their members because of small group dynamics.

6. The church already had a large number of adult church school classes, but several were divided purposely to acknowledge and meet the differing needs of those attending.

7. Because individuals now were feeling their individuality was being valued, their involvement in leadership roles increased. New leadership emerged. Many new young couples were now attending and becoming leaders.

8. The worship service changed in a number of ways:

1. The sermons bore a more frequent inclusion of a call to commitment.
 2. A children's sermon was included.
 3. Once a month a lay member was invited to give a "Testimony of Faith."
 4. Responsive readings were included.
 5. A time of "Informal Moments" for greeting one another in the pews was added.
 6. Communion in the Sanctuary was scheduled more frequently.
9. A systematic through-the-Bible study (The Trinity Bible Study, developed by a Methodist Pastor in Dallas, Texas) was begun with eighty attending. The study is in its third phase and is going strong. Never before had there been this type of program in a mid-week format.
10. A significant result mentioned was that the program boosted "on-going programs." This was significant to the committee, because they seemed to take pride in the fact that their efforts to enhance the program of the church were doing just that. They could now point out just why they should be doing what they were doing.
11. The church was showing only slight numerical growth, but the committee members felt that there was increased spiritual vitality in those who had become involved in the Church Growth program.



Griffin United
Methodist Church
Acres of lawn
Red Georgia Brick
buildings
and the bell tower
all call the people
to worship



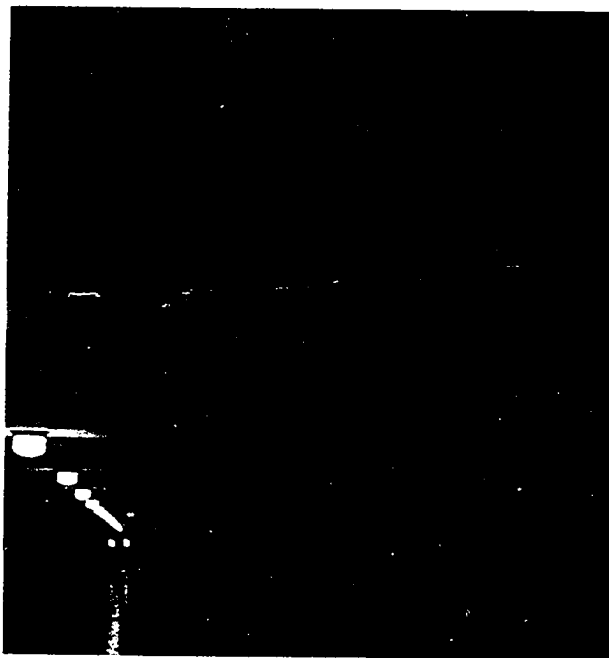
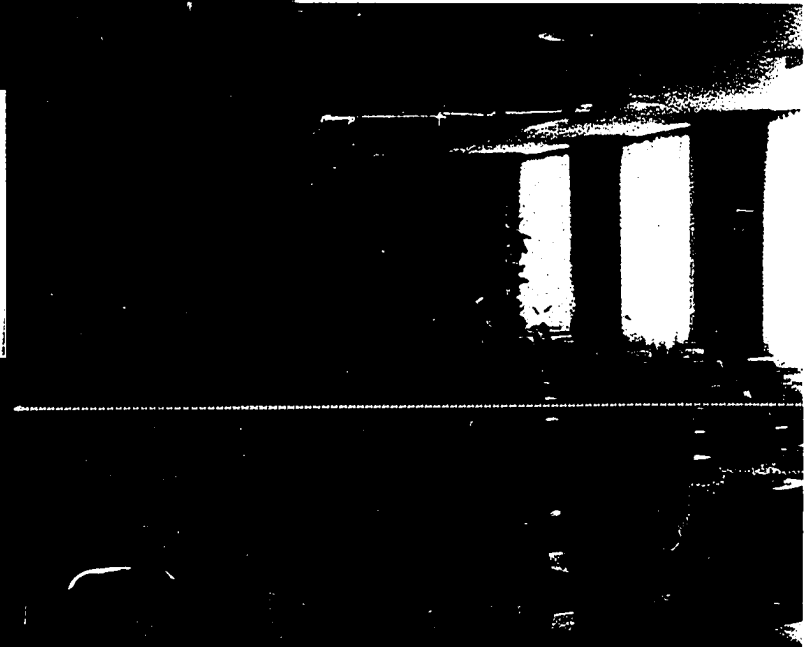
Pre-school
serves the
community's children



Inside
a spacious
Sanctuary



Classrooms for all



Bright classrooms
for children



ACWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4340 Collins Circle

Acworth, Georgia 30101

Phone: 404-974-3312

Pastor: James H. Lowery

Acworth United Methodist Church is situated in one of the most picturesque settings possible. A beautiful Georgian brick colonial building, complete with white colonnades, surrounded by poplar and white birch trees on a woodlined lake, the church is inviting to anyone who might see it. Acworth is a small but rapidly growing community to the north of Atlanta, Georgia. While the town, between 1970 and 1979, grew by seventy-two people, the surrounding community grew by 10,000 in the same period. It is an old town with newness all around. The church membership was about 520 with an average worship attendance of 120. (The rolls were trimmed to 469 during the progress of the Church Growth program).

During the previous ten or fifteen years, the church had experienced a great deal of turmoil, turning over three or four pastors, one after another, each with personal problems greater than his predecessor. The last pastor resigned at mid-year (January).

The present pastor, Jim Lowery, came at mid-year, and conditions began to improve. The involvement in the Total Church Growth program came to the church under the leadership

of Rev. Lowery, although the program is recognized as lay-led, start to finish.

Prior to the introduction of the program, the congregation seemed desperate but determined. Their ideas about growth seemed to emanate from a "maintenance mentality;" "If we don't get more people we are in real trouble." Their self-image was good, but doubts had begun to surface because of the rapid turn-over of their pastors. A few people recognized possibilities for growth, but leaders were needed. The leadership core amounted to about fifteen or twenty people, "doing everything."

The present pastor is very aggressive and "involved in it all." He is liked by the leadership. Along with the consultant, the pastor chose a very competent Church Growth Committee, and they went to work.

The results of this church's involvement in the program are quite diverse:

1. The church has moved from a single cell to a multiple celled programming stance. Simply stated, this means that a multiplicity of activities function simultaneously. Success does not depend on the participation of the whole congregation in every program.

2. Programs for a broad cross-section of interests are in place. These give many options for fellowship, education, and social interaction:

- a. A single women's class
- b. A men's group
- c. Several couples study groups
- d. A youth program

3. The leadership base has broadened from the fifteen to twenty to over fifty.

4. A "Family Life Center" was planned and built.

5. In 1983 (when the interview was conducted) the congregation received twenty-four persons into membership by profession of faith. This number was twice that projected in the goal-setting process for the year. Conversion growth had been placed high on the list in the Church's Priority Plan.

6. Much of the leadership now function with "Church Growth Eyes," meaning they understand the diverse needs of persons outside the church and have a good idea of how to offer many different "doors of entry." This makes it easier for newcomers to find their way into the church and into the fellowship of the congregation.

7. The leaders feel that they have accomplished all their original goals and strongly anticipate movement to a second stage with formulation of new goals.

8. The leaders feel the congregation has reached higher levels of spiritual maturity and have a deeper commitment to reach others for Christ.



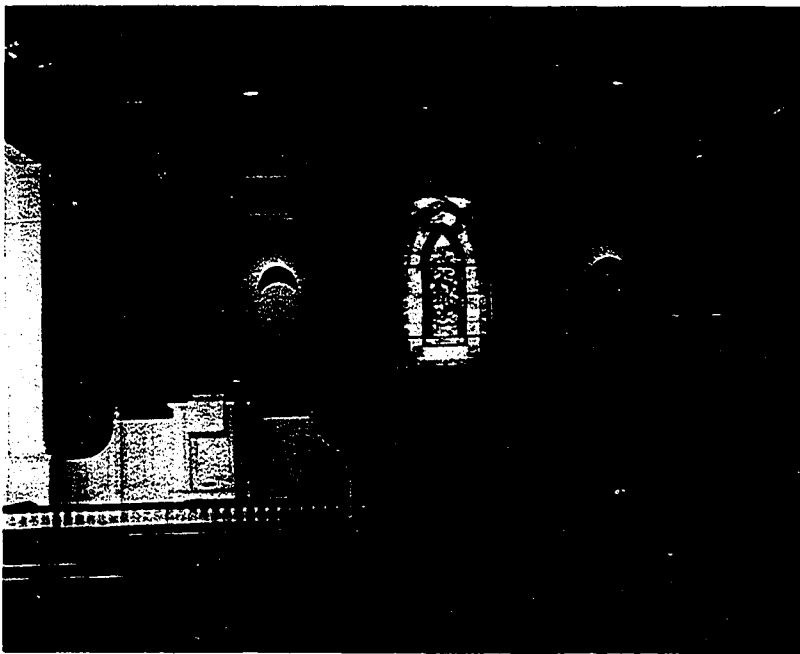
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Acworth United
Methodist Church
situated on a
picturesque lake

with its white
collonades



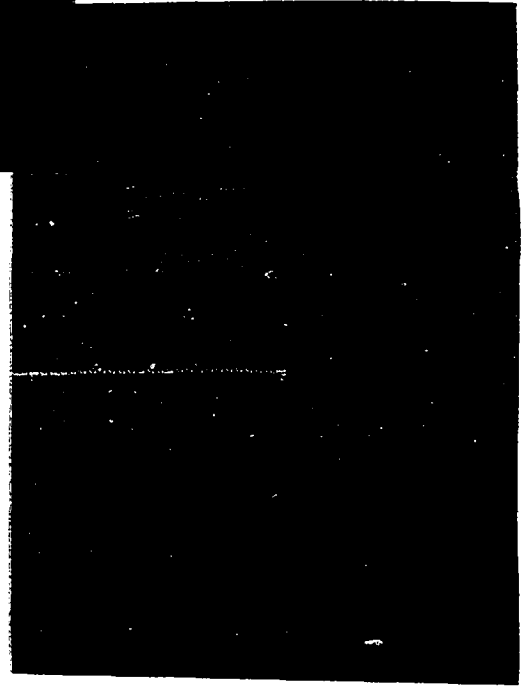
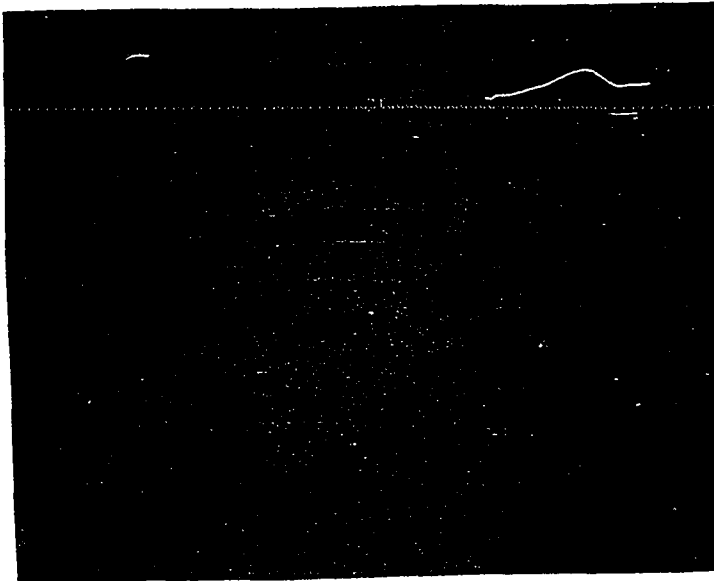
red Georgia brick is
warm
and
welcoming



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Inside
the stately
sanctuary

Plans for a family life center



Becoming a reality



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

While each church had its own unique set of circumstances and level of involvement with the program, the overall benefits seemed to fall within the following areas:

1. A deepening of awareness as to the principles which impact a church's growth potential and increased desire on the part of the laypeople to use those principles in their planning processes.
2. More intentional planning of programs with an awareness that there must be a consideration of the "total church."
3. A broadening of the base of leadership.
4. More extensive involvement of a greater number of persons in the programs of the church.
5. A greater emphasis on and participation in Bible studies.
6. A greater emphasis on and participation in Small Groups.
7. Church facilities were repaired and up-graded and used to better advantage. (Several churches entered into building programs with specific ministries intended for those new facilities).
8. Financial giving increased.
9. Attendance increased. (Statistics are varied).
10. Membership increased. Those joining by profession

of faith increased in some churches. (Statistics vary. Note: Several churches purged their rolls).

11. Overall spiritual vitality was recognized.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

The United Methodist Church continues to be a mighty agency through which God can work. Nevertheless, some problems exist, and perhaps some mistakes are being made, which are causing this great institution to decline as it has. External indicators point to the fact that the Church Universal has not lost its power to attract. Other denominations are growing. The "electric church" is having a field day. People continue to express an interest in religion. According to a recent Gallup Poll,¹ 74% of unchurched Americans want their children to receive religious instruction.

Every institution runs the risk, perhaps by assuming that it is eternal, of passing off its contemporary scene by failing to make the necessary updates and course adjustments. The church has always struggled to keep from being too far behind its contemporaries. From time to time the Church makes the mistake of being too much "with it," too much a part of its culture, so that the distinctions are blurred, and there is no longer a distinct call to "come out from among them and be separate." Whatever have been the factors, and there have been many, the beginnings of finding a solu-

¹Warren Hartman's report to the Council of Bishops, the United Methodist Church, April, 1982.

tion to any problem is to admit there is a problem. Ignoring the situation, pretending no problem exists, will not make it go away. We can foolishly discount the success of others, or we can re-examine our lack of it. Word games are fun for rainy afternoons, but trivializing the issue by redefining success, and speaking of "quality and not quantity" just won't do in clear sunlight. The United Methodist Church must act. There must be a thorough diagnosis and intelligent analysis of all the factors. The church must supply itself with the best information and tools available. This is no time to be parochial. The United Methodist Church has often risen above provincialism, and it must do so now. Using whatever information and tools are available, from wherever they may come, it must intentionally change direction and begin again to move forward and upward.

The Church Growth Movement, best represented by the leadership of the Charles E. Fuller Institute, has done its homework. Drawing from the best that is offered from a multiplicity of disciplines, both academic and professional, it has developed a vast "data base" from which to offer valuable assistance. Its theology and methodology are consistent with Methodist tradition and polity. The best of Methodist history and heritage are replete with precedents for doing what is advocated by the Church Growth Movement. It would not be presumptions to say that John Wesley himself would say a hearty "Amen." Research from within the church confirms the

findings [i.e., The Report to the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church, April, 1982] and advocates the same.

In the practical vein, proven programmatic tools are available. The field-tested success of the Total Church Growth Model establishes it as applicable and usable. Local United Methodist congregations are celebrating the progress being made because of their involvement with the program.

There is a recognizable desire on the part of "the people called Methodists" to be "the people of God." Many are seeking ways to "make disciples of all nations." Some are experiencing again the joy of baptizing men and women who come to their fellowships by profession of faith. There is a rekindling interest in "teaching them to observe" what the Lord Jesus has commanded. Small groups are forming for spiritual nurture and support, and the promise of the Lord's presence with them is wonderfully enjoyed.

On the larger scene, many pastors and laymen hesitate, awaiting permission from the church's leaders which will legitimize what they see being done where growth is occurring. It remains for the Bishops to speak an authoritative word.

Through use of these proven tools, the floodgates of God's blessing can be cranked open even wider, and the United Methodist Churches can be washed afresh with the mighty outpouring of God's reviving Spirit.

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APPENDIX

Rev. James Thurmond

We're talking about his involvement with the "Total Church Growth" program as pastor of this church. I feel that by talking with him, we're going to learn some things about what happened in the life of this church and perhaps how we can better serve the churches with this program.

Ron: Jim, can you describe for us the congregation prior to the involvement with Total Church Growth program, say the involvement of the people in the programs of the church? What was the church's self image, sense of mission, maybe you could speak a little bit attitudes towards growth, either personally or numerically?

Jim: The church, when I arrived on the scene, seems back in 1977, a middle of the year move, the church had experienced a 10 or so of status quo movement within the community. Urbanization had taken place all around the community. The church after having built some new buildings in the later part of the 60's had kind of leveled off. The people wanted some things to happen but could not verbalize or could not point specifics aspects of ministry developing, so they were a little down. This is through no fault of being particular person per se just a happening in changings of the community that had evolved over a decade or so. Beginning that decade of the late 60's early 70's with high expectations of tremendous booming development and then it not taking place. The people were kind of down, eager though, found them to be very receptive, doing some re-examining of some programs that were ongoing, like pre-school, that we conducted for a good many years and some were feeling that it was not paying its way so let's get rid of it and the re-evaluation of programs like that. Well, the church was struggling and holding its own with its previous pastor looking at programs of ministry, trying to find a niche, a way of doing things that would bring what they could see to be some growth, numerical or spiritual growth.

Ron: This church was begun in the 1830's. Can you talk a little bit about that? I'm interested...

Jim: The church came out with old camp meetings that began under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, prior to the Civil War. The people in the area felt like they need some religious experiences and the best time for that to happen was in the early fall when the crops were all in the ground and there was a little spell of freedom. So people flocked to the 42 acres of land, set it aside and dedicated to the church to be used for spiritual growth and development. When the camp meeting was born two week time in the late summer, August, people would come and families would camp literally around the arbor and would have a time of fellowship and fun and this kind of development and then some spiritual growth or preaching, evangelism, these kinds of things that were expresenative of the Great Awakinging, hell,

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fire, and damnation walk of sawdust trail type of services and that moved and through the time of the Civil War and then in the early 1870's, the community had grown to the point that needed some kind of on-going institution so the Sunday School was developed 1868-69 and the church was born in 1872, with preaching once a month and it became a part of Methodist circuit that a one time numbered 8-10 churches. A circuit rider would come through and do his thing and be off and the people would meet for Sunday School on a regular basis and the church through the years grew until it developed at one time to be in excess of 600 members. There were building a building on this spot. The church finally acquired a deeds from the Camp Meetings and has its own property run by a separate group of trustees and church authorities. The camp meeting continues the program to this day, meeting 155 years without interruption, even during war they had camp meetings. When I say war the people around here talk about Civil War and remember all that. The camp meeting were located across the road, the State Highway, they do their thing, independent of the church, independent of the Mother Church even, have no clergy on their organizational boards, even though they are responsive to the church and their own trustees are elected to annual conference. It's kind of a phenomenon that continues, to hold religious services once a year while the church continues to minister to the people on a day by day basis.

Ron: It runs parallel to it but it really doesn't interact with it much.

Jim: That's right.

Ron: What do you think was the congregation's sense of mission before this program began?

Jim: Well, it was good. They wanted to do some things, in fact they would go out of their way to get involved in some missions. Raising financial support not under the auspices of the Methodist Church, but through an independent group had raised at one point in the early 70's over a period of five years some \$70-80,000 to be paid this was the kind of thing where missionaries were brought in over a weekend and they kind of, I don't want to use the word hype but maybe I should, their wares. The people were enthusiastic and wanting to do something but the church didn't provided that same kind of interest so they tied into that program. This would indicate the people were hungry to do something.

Ron: How did you see the possibilities for growth?

Jim: We arrived in '77 and the people had dreams of continuing a building program with a large sanctuary to be built to seat about 1500 people and yet nothing had happened between the years with a net growth of about 4 members would suggest leveling off. The changes in the community. Seemed to me that the church needed to re-evaluate what they meant by growth, whether this would be just a super-church or whether the church would be a community-oriented ministry type church. So we began looking around for ways and means to find direction and help and the Church Growth movement was introduced to me by a pastor who had been involved

In it and that's the way I got to be introduced to Mel Schell and through conversations with him, checked into the whole philosophy of Church Growth by looking at other churches, going to different seminars, sharing in a particular area of ministry that was new to me, personally. Then we got the lay people involved and from that point got involved in the Church Growth movement. But I really had no preset idea of things I wanted to happen either numerically or otherwise at that point, back in the late 70's. 144

Ron: So you say that you kind of caught the bug. Some people began to stimulate your thinking along this line and a few lay people were involved. How was the congregation as a whole brought on board with this program because we're talking about an outlay of money, we're talking about allocation of key leadership for the an extended peroid of time. How is that all done?

Jim: Ok, first of all, through this mutual friend in the pastorate, I met with Mel Schell, shared some time with other churches, not Methodist churches, but with other churches as to what they were doing in this particular area, about the whole Church Growth Movement to kind of get a feel for verbage and the kinds of things that they were talking about. Then, myself and three lay people went through one of Win Arn's weekend retreats, where he put on his program dealing with Church Growth with the fields, needs, and the strategy and the workbooks and all of that and came away feeling pretty good. This was the way with a church that really looked at itself, get a picture, a snapshot picture, a see where it was, where it had been, and maybe even, hopefully, develop some goals for the future. Having had a good experience with three or four key lay people, then we arranged a luncheon meeting with the chairman of the administrative board and Mel Schell, church growth consultant in the Atlanta area, and myself. We talked about how he might help us, the costs and all the other aspects of using the consultant and from that presented the idea to the Administrative Board, with the help of these people who had attended some workshops, knew something about Church Growth, at least from the surface anyway. The board bought the idea as a way in which the church could do some real serious thinking about its own reason for being its purpose and hopefully to develop some long-range goals.

Ron: So the administrative board approved the plan, the involvement of the whole church, and begins. Now what were the initial reations to the program when it was introduced?

Jim: Costs too much. We don't need an outsider telling us how we ought to do things. Those are the two most frequent objections. But the board allocated the money. We suggested that the Methodist heritage has always had outsiders, District Superintendents, Bishops, etc. sharing with us and that we learn. Not that they will dictate what we do or do not do but they can help us against the unexpected and so those objections were silenced and everybody felt good about getting into the program.

Ron: I'll just pick up on word. You said they were "silenced". Is it the idea that when you silence a person that the objection is gone or do you mean...

Jim: Well, I meant really that the people said OK, Yes, this does make sense, why not.

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Ron: Could any of those difficulties been avoided?

Jim: Probably not. I would think those are the kinds of questions when you do new things. You ask how much it will cost, what will be the results, is it going to be worth the time and energy and effort involved. And what is this, in this case, what is this person, what is he going to get out of it? Are we being used. Those kind of questions. I think that's true of any kind of new program. And, you know, they're legitimate questions that have to be dealt with and if they are dealt with up front and honestly, if the concerns of the people are valid, and the whole program can be healthy if they're not valid and those people as it were, understand and feel good about it. They had their input and they're ready to go, you go on with the program.

Ron: This is a very involving program. The leadership is asked to meet almost weekly, in many cases. There's a great deal of study work and follow-on work, going out in the community and gathering information. How does this affect the on-going life of the church? If you take some of the key lay people, which in a sense most people end up doing, is there a church life apart from the work of analysis and church growth committee meetings and report writing. For instance, for you as a pastor, do you have time to do all these and the other duties that you do as a pastor?

Jim: Yes, I think all this is simply support for what you're doing. You begin to look more creatively at what you do as far as I was concerned personally, and ask "Is all the work I'm doing worth it?" You begin to ask questions like that and the people do the same thing so I think it helps growth and hinders the other aspects of church life and those programs and concerns that the church may utilize and give all this energy to seem not to be worth while so they kind of put them on a shelf and maybe die. Whereas, maybe other areas you begin to say, "This is something we ought to do or look into at least" and you begin to whet people's appetites and they begin to work a little harder in certain areas. I think for the good of the church, it was a positive kind of experience. It did take a lot of work. The committee chairman one time took a calculator and tabulated all the people who were involved and told me 1900 work hours were spent to complete this project over a period of about 18 months. I'm sure some of those hours were not utilized as they should be but just to think about that, that's a lot of time and energy and effort that people put into it and so they are going to see some things happen.

Ron: How many people did you have involved in that leadership and the committee and sub-committees and...

Jim: Originally... there's some reports here, we could look it up, but I think seven people in the Initial Church Growth Committee and then we begin seeing the directions we needed to go or wanted to go and that committee was enlarged to about 24-30.

Ron: And they were involved in different levels...

Jim: They were assigned certain Task Force groups to get information, to do some research, to gather all this kind of factual knowledge. And then were assigned, the chairperson of the church growth committee would assign all these people to work, to sub-groups, to put together ideas and concerns in a credible form that would give some direction to the rest of the church.

Ron: While they were given the assignment to do all this analysis, report writing and all, was there input to them on the inspirational or motivational or educational level?

Jim: Much input as far as educational and motivational type input came in several additional workshops, here at the local church. We used local church growth video tapes, and materials, etc. A lot of our people were able later to go to another workshop Win Arn was putting on here from California. Our consultant, Mel Schell met with our people on several occasions, numerous occasions in fact and gave a lot of direction, motivational-wise, and educational wise. As far as the inspiration, the spiritual growth at that point I think that was the kind of spill over from the excitement and the joy of doing something that we were going to be able to put down on paper that will give us a direction. That's where we got the adrenalin flowing spiritually. As far as the early stages some great descending down of the Holy Spirit, I don't think our people felt that, yet at the same time they feel like here's something the church is involved in in which we out of it... we are really hopefully... and we felt at that point good about it, going to find some ways and means in which this church could grow and develop not just numerically but spiritually so that was coming along. Then as a result of that, we did do some things that have provided tremendous spiritual growth, that were a direct result from the program and goals and church growth study.

Ron: I get the idea, then, that you followed the plan pretty much step by step?

Jim: We figured we're paying Mel Schell \$3,000, we're going to do what he said. I remember one aspect of the program that we just said, "We're not going to do it that way." and that was how we took a church-wide questionnaire. We deviated from his suggestion which was to utilize a large portion of morning Worship Service to give people these questionnaires during the church service itself, the 11:00 Worship Service, you know, ask these questions. Our worship work area, myself, the church growth people, felt like that's not the kind of thing we want to do in a formal worship service. So we just said no, we're going to do it our way. And our way was to mail out, to the entire membership and ask them do some creative thinking about this. Have spouses talk together, families talk together, etc. and we were pleasantly rewarded with almost 90% return on our questionnaires and Mel himself was gratified that we had gotten that much of a return. Plus the fact that we got answers from some people that just did not come to worship or were actively involved in the program. And that became more of a standard in our district-wide interest in church growth. That's one area

that we felt like we as a church growth group, local church, that we knew more or knew a better way than the specialist. 147

Ron: Now, you said you got 90% back. How many did you send out percentage wise to the whole congregation?

Jim: OK, we, as I recall, here again our chairperson could answer these questions better than I, as I recall right at that point we had right about 180 or so family units, this could be multiple (husband, wife, kids) or maybe even one single person, a retiree or something. And we got returned almost 90% of those 190 some odd we sent out. We sent to everybody on our membership roll was given the opportunity to return a questionnaire. And close to 90% returned. There was some follow-up with telephone committees saying, "Hey that paper's on the kitchen table or on the desk or on the drawer or maybe even the trash. Do you need another one? We took a couple weeks to really work our people.

Ron: Speaking of working your people. The people really do work very hard at this process. What are your thinkings about the daily mechanics of the program? Do you think it's too complicated, burdensome, or was it facilitated well? Did you get any symptoms of burn-out from the people who were involved in this?

Jim: Our consultant was very thorough at that point. He shared with us at the very initial stages what the program would encompass. Our people, our committee, was selected on a person-person basis by the chairperson and myself. So we knew they were people who were willing to give the time and energy. It was a commitment to the growth and development of the church. There were no surprises there. I think the burn-out level if you might want to use this, came after we completed 18 months study and preparation and filed report. The idea being that we needed to go into another phase and do some reviewing and this kind of thing and our committee felt like like that was too close to the event. Part of this was just, "I'm tired, I don't want to do any more of this right now." Plus the fact that our proposals were 17 in number, specific type proposals that came out of the study and we needed some time apart from those events or happenings, months even years before we could look back and really begin to evaluate. Now on the surface, there were certain things we could tell were happening or not happening. But, I think we made a right decision at that point not to just go on and just pursue with more questionnaires, etc. in the period of less than two years. I don't think the people were ready. I think we won't receive that much benefit... We pulled back at that point. But periodically, in our reporting to the Administration Board we say, "OK, the church growth study said we have completed this project or not completed this project as the case may be, therefore..." and so we are continually evaluation without that same pressure packed concern. I was talking with the chairperson of the committee just last night in reference to our conversation today and the conversation we'll have again later. And he remarks, "It's been two years... (this report was formalized in the spring of 1980.) It might be good now to kind of see now where our congregation is and maybe do another congregational questionnaire. Whether or not we'll do that I don't know, we may

need more time. We've not really thought it out thoroughly, I'm not sure about that. 148

Ron: Now, you mentioned that you finished the report writing the spring of '80. That means your program virtually has been almost two years in the making and the results should start becoming evident. What changes do you think were made in the congregation's attitude say toward church growth concept or toward a the idea that this church should and can be growing? Was there any change in the self image? Sense of mission? Talk to me about that a little bit.

Jim: The chief learning we got from this experience was the fact that Campground United Methodist Church was indeed responsible for its own future. And that we had to be intentional about it, that we couldn't just wait for people to walk in the door, that we had no basis for controlling the community changes. We just couldn't control a lot of things that were outside of the church community. What we could control was our relationship to the large community, what we wanted to do, what we could do, what we envisioned doing, and SO THE CHIEF LEARNING ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM WAS MORE IMPORTANT FOR ME, AT LEAST AT THIS POINT HAS BEEN THE INTENTIONAL KIND OF MINISTRY THAT THE CHURCH HAS SET OUT TO DO FOLLOWING THIS KIND OF EXPERIENCE. For ten years, as I was looking through our records... After having built some new buildings with a grandiose design of having a large super-church with a 1500 seat sanctuary and all that not having come to pass in a decade, the people were asking, "What's wrong? Something's wrong with us. Something's wrong with the community." Nobody really knew. But this study development really said to the church, "Hey, you may not be a super-church, numbers wise, but you can make a difference, and if you want to, then you've got to develop some strategy, some programs, ministries, outreach, etc. and then set out to doing it. Don't go crying around saying, "Poor us. The other church is bigger." or "The that church is coming and taking all our people" or "They didn't send us the right preacher." or whatever. Hey, nobody is responsible for this church except us, the people. And now under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we can be the church we should be, maybe not the church we want to be, but we can be the church we ought to be.

Ron: So, this self image, you're telling me, improved?

Jim: Oh, tremendously. People began to envision the fact that whatever our status was number wise, at that point didn't make that big a deal for us. That was not going to be the final grading point as to whether our Campground Church was a good church or a bad church. So, we began to do some real ministry, I think both within, nurturing, and without, outreach.

Ron: I'm excited to have you talk about these programs and proposals that you made. Now you alluded to the fact that there were 17 of them. What changes were made in the program? What are some things you think you accomplished or are in the process of accomplishing as a result of the program?

Jim: Well, the thing I think our church and myself as a pastor are most proud of, I guess, is that in this process of studying the congregation, the questionnaire, personal interviews, and all the things that go with the Church Growth intensive program, we discovered that our people considered themselves to be Biblically illiterate, and that they really wanted to know something about the Bible. This is the day in time for re-emphasis on the Word and what the Bible is saying and what it meant back then and what it might mean to us in this day in time. So some 67% of our people indicated a real desire for some kind of intensive growing edge to be developed in relationship to the Bible. So that's set as to doing something. The whole 17 point proposal was to do something about that. Now, at that point, we didn't know what, so another sub-committee, task force was developed, and began to do some investigation, and as a result of that, one new Sunday School class was developed that had its goal to study the Bible. It worked hard to develop its own curriculum, literature, this was before the Methodist Church had come out with its Genesis to Revelation series. This class now is studying that group. Also, out of this whole process came our church's involvement in Bethel Bible Studies that is headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin. We investigated several possibilities of some intensive kinds of Bible Studies that would involve the entire congregation. This required a tremendous outlay of money, to get involved, the people no longer were fearful of paying money to outsiders because the Church Growth had been a success, at least to get an understanding of what we were doing in the church. So, we were able to buy into the Bethel program after looking at others. There's a lot of good programs out there, but this seemed to be the one that I would use best. The church sent me to Madison for a two-week seminar. Since then we've come back and put a two year training process at 15 teachers that have been trained by myself, personally for 2 1/2 hours a week for a period of two years in Old and New Testament. And presently, right this very minute, every Wednesday night, we've got 90 adults here in this facility studying the Bible, the Bethel Bible Series. That's three classes of 30 each, and a new class will be organized on Jan. 4. We're already even projecting ahead to go even further into New Dimensions that the Bethel Series offers. And have 15 people that have been trained more than a seminary student is trained as far as the content of the Bible, survey wise. It's to know that that's part of our core curriculum here at Campground, that's the amazing thing to me. And then to know that a good many people are coming out, paying money, going through a disciplined week-by-week type of study, it's phenomenal. And that we are doing something about a need that appeared (was identified) two years ago. So that's one thing that is a real joy for me personally and for our people. They're excited and very happy about it.

One other, to change the tempo from a nurturing, spiritual kind of experience to a maintenance type of thing, we decided that there was no need to dream all about some great cathedral type sanctuary. So, through the proper procedures of church conference, etc., have abandoned some long-length goals to build a 1500-seat sanctuary and have renovated, \$25,000 worth, a large fellowship hall that had been substituting as a sanctuary and has been carpeted, pews, etc., etc., which is now very adequate and

lovely, 400-seat sanctuary. We're ready now to, and have already 150
elected a building committee, going to the church conference to
hire an architect to plan, develop, the joining together of our
activities building/gymnasium complex with the rest of our plant
and we will see that become a reality. It is a direct result of
the study of the community, the number of other churches in the
community the number of other Methodist churches the were close
by, 3,4 and 5 miles, all about our same size. So, we are
thinking realistically now to meet our needs for the future and
also meet the needs of the community.

Ron: Were any programs developed that addressed outreach?

Jim: Yes, specifically, of course, were the traditional things
of revivals, and lay witness missions, this kind of thing.
They're all in the report. We just now at a point where we're
addressing to go the other major aspects of our church outreach.
That is we're already enrolled, or will be going through this
Evangelism Explosion Training in March of '84. We're also going
through that week long workshop, the one that's going to be held
here in Atlanta. We're looking at that as a possibility of
programming for our church to really become serious about
evangelism. We're also looking at one other program. That is the
Stephan Ministry that is being used by several other
denominations with United Methodists. And this year we'll go
through those workshops. Now, which one of these programs we
will eventually choose to become our program, I'm not sure. I'm
biased myself toward the Stephan Ministries, but some of our
people have the same biases toward the E.E. So, we're going to
expose ourselves to both, sit down, evaluate, decide, and go with
the program. We've been so thrilled with the Bethel program, not
just the curriculum but the total package that moves you along,
and has goals, and it's just so thrilling there, and we had so
much success that we need something like that to help us with our
evangelism.

Ron: Now you've used the pronoun "we" a number of times. This
sounds like it really is something that the congregation, lay
people, are giving leadership to. Is that what you're telling
me?

Jim: Oh, yes. This 20-page report, Church Growth Report, was
basically written by our committee, chaired by a chemist, that
works with a large cement manufacturing company here in the area.
I serve simply at this point as a kind of motivator, but, Don and
the committee did this work basically. That's a thrill for me
also in the sense that this is not the preacher's program, but it
is our program together. The state board feels that same way so
when we mention the Church Growth Report, our Church Growth
Involvement, the people, many of them, I said 90% of them
answered questionnaires and a whole flock of them were on various
sub-committees and the task force group. So they all feel like
they've had some input and so the things that are coming out of
this, the people can identify with because they've shared in the
development. That's a good plus for this kind of exposure.

Ron: So the programming is coming out of the people and in a sense the changes have been initiated and consequently followed through on by the people themselves.

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Jim: All these proposals from the church growth group were written up in a systematic order that shows who's responsible, a task force or an individual. We know what going to happen, what should happen, it doesn't always happen because there's been some failures obviously. We go back and re-evaluate, and say that wasn't a very good idea in the first place. We're not going to get hung up about it, we're not going to feel bad about it, we're going to do something that's going to be even better.

Ron: We can often have changes in programming which we can say, "Yes, we did this. No, we didn't do it" Changes on the personal level are a little more difficult to evaluate, nevertheless, sometimes we can look at a case or two and say there were some real life style changes for this person. Do you have any for instances in terms of you can say, "This person has come to me and said there's some real changes in my life as a result of the programs we've done or just my attitudes and as a result of church growth?"

Jim: We have no dramatic kind of stories that would be tear-jerkers but I'm certain the chairperson and the members of that original task force group have often said in my presence and in the presence of other people that they matured, grew up, during this period of real struggle in ways that they had not anticipated before. Those kind of things, comments have been heard frequently. The mentality of the church and the friendliness of the church were good when we began. They were looking for something, some handle to hang on to, to give some direction. They were kind of floundering around a bit and so the people look back and say, "Hey, this guy's on the right track." So everybody has a good warm feeling about the whole concept of Church Growth. It's not the kind of thing that dominates everything we do, because we deviate from our program at certain points. (We felt like it's better to do it another.) We haven't felt guilty about it or apologetic because it's that way. Sometimes we're right and sometimes we're wrong. But some good "vibes" I guess you'd say are apparent and nobody cringes when you mention the word Church Growth or anything like that.

Ron: What happened to you personally during the development of the program, or subsequent to it?

Jim: I think the most important thing was that this whole struggle with developing a kind of statement about what the church was all about just re-enforced my own previous commitments to intentional ministry, and gave some validity to that which got me proud to have company kind of... helped my own ego, this kind of thing, so say, "Hey, you know, I wasn't that far off base that we really need to do some struggling about what the church is about in the world. Church Growth, (the term Church Growth at points is a misnomer, and at other points it creates an image that's not quite fair even though some founders of church growth movement in the modern era, you associate with just numbers of

people, get everybody "saved" or in the church, baptized, and all our problems will be solved. That's certainly not the complete story.) My own background development had been more to the actual doing, developing growth of people, spiritual well-being. First you got to get them in a church, to be sure, and baptized. The major emphasis of the church, it seems, is discipliship and then out of that kind of discipling of personal resources, etc., then the outreach can become a cycle where people are disciplined, they go out, bring others in... That's why the Stephens Ministries I was talking about appeals to me personally. The whole church growth study was a satisfying thing for me personally, even though I at times wanted to do battle with Mel Schell and others....

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Ron: Jim, I'm hearing from you a sense of success and accomplishment as a result of being involved in this program. Can you tell me what you think are some of the key factors in the success of the program are? I'm thinking in terms, as most of us would think, what is the involvement of the pastor, the lay leadership, and obviously the consultant, is that a key factor. Can you talk a little bit about the influence of the pastor in the success of the program?

Jim: Yes, I believe I already alluded to the fact I looked at myself as kind of a motivator. I try not to do the work. If this program of Church Growth it's worth its weight in salt, then it won't depend on one personality. So I tried to act as motivator, but did not attend every little task force group, I did attend nearly all of the Church Growth committee meetings, to offer input and listen and hear and find inspiration myself. So, I think the pastor's main thrust is motivational, "Let's keep at it, let's don't give up, I know you're tired, but let's get those reports in, do some study of the community." Find out what's going on, their projections for the future, ten or twenty, thirty years from now. Look at our people in the Sunday School, all these various things that are involved in these task forces and help bring all that to some kind of melting pot where you put it all in there and stir it up and come out with some kind of facts and figures, I see the pastor there. That is his chief working into the program.

Ron: Do you find that your preaching, other teaching aspects... did you find that what you were experiencing and working out with other people, was it overflowing to sermons and that?

Jim: Sure, I think just to hear from questionnaires and comments and much of the material that is gathered through personal interviews, to hear all that and then through the consultant to hear his appraisal of what we're doing... to hear all that coming from other people helps the pastor to find sermon material, direction for sermons anyway, etc. etc. So you didn't feel like you was just doing your thing and hope you hit some key spots and points but actually there was some real life. One of the things that came out of this was the need for marital enrichment and we've been involved in the M.E. program. We had some workshops, weekend retreats, etc. Got a big retreat up in the mountains planned for next fall, as a direct result of this, for 100 families probably up there. So to hear all that it helps the

preacher to turn the right switch or at least to speak to the persons about, "Hey, this is something we ought to be doing. I 153 heard this through the committee and that..."

Ron: Now, in addition to that, is there a possibility that you can somehow support what the work of the committee is by the kinds of sermons you're preaching so that when they're moving into a phase that you can be addressing... Did you do some of that as well?

Jim: Oh sure. Those kinds of things just happened. Come out feeling enthusiastic about a program. It comes from the people too.

Ron: Lay leadership, you were saying, is extremely crucial to this...

Jim: That's the key

Ron: What about the selection process? Were you careful in that?

Jim: We were fortunate in Mel Schell, whom we've mentioned several times, I think he calls his ministry Church Growth, Inc. or Growth Ministries, Inc., working in Atlanta. We were close enough to him to get direction and he provided invaluable leadership, knowing what was going to be required of the lay people involved in the in-depth study, how much time it would take, the kind of personalities needed, etc. and these people were solicited on a person-to-person basis. We just didn't make an announcement saying we needed 25 people to volunteer for this program. We don't want to do that because they are going to work and if they don't do it, it's not going to get done. So, drawing from his expertise and having worked with a lot of churches in this area, we found, in our case, the right people to share and to provide leadership and it worked.

Ron: Is it a matter of willingness, or is it a matter of skills? Do you look for skills? Is it just a personality or does the person have to have something more?

Jim: I think you need some people on this committee that have some expertise in being able to gather data and understand what it's all about, computer read-out this kind of thing. You need some people that are skilled in that because some of this stuff came and I wouldn't have known how to do it. The consultant provide leadership. We were fortunate to have some people from IBM etc. so we pulled those in, he pulled personnel people in. So, with a consultant, you have the advantage of knowing the kinds you people you need to pull off the program. Otherwise you just flounder around and maybe get a committee that wasn't skilled enough. Of course, obviously, you got to have people who are willing to give the time and feel the Spirit's leading that here in the church is really trying to come to grips with who and what it is. So there's a motive that's deeper than just getting the information. Here's something that's going to be crucial to where the church is going to operate.

Ron: By looking for people with particular skills and some personality and the ability, were you able to bring into leadership some people that hadn't been previously involved?

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Jim: Right, and that was good both for the committee and the development of the church. To go to people and say, "Hey, we got this program coming up, we need somebody that has these kinds of skills. I know you have these." It may well be in the past that we just kind of passed by certain people because they weren't exactly as involved as somebody else. So, we found some new leadership.

Ron: Good, I would think that that might come up. You mentioned the consultant and obviously the program that is designed by a person and a small group of people. What is the importance of the consultant throughout the entire process?

Jim: Mel Schell, in our case, provided the expertise to carry out the program. He was employed in a sense as an arm of our church to come in and work with us for a period of approximately 18 months. Initially was involved in several of the workshops that trained our lay people, there were held here on our church campus. People got to know him, relate to his personality, and could know they had somebody who was an "expert" in the field. He also provided that kind of leadership an outsider can provide. He can say things to our committee, jack them up at times. Say you're doing that wrong or you need to work this a little harder... They could get mad at him, or angry at him and that saved me. If he didn't do it, I would have to do it. So we could share this kind of ministry or leadership because he isn't going to be doing things elsewhere and I'll still be here. So it's just like a stewardship campaign, or anything to do that don't require a lot of hard work and discipline and expertise, it's good to bring in an outsider, for that kind of enterprise. We were happy with Mel's work though at times we disagreed on certain points. That's to be expected, and that provided a dialog and he was able to help us answer Church Growth questionnaires went out and all the interviewing and he himself did some interviewing and put that on tape and it's interesting to go back and listen to some of that and hear his appraisal of our church, where he is or was at that time, from an outsider's point of view. Without the consultant, the program would not have been the success that it has been for us.

Ron: Does the church still engage the services of a consultant?

Jim: No, we do not. After that initial 18 months with our program in place, we no longer set aside any resources for that. From time to time, I call Mel for advice or counsel, and this has been given free by him and I feel free to do it even to this very day. The Church Growth program that Mel developed calls for an additional questionnaire, kind of a reflection that we haven't done that yet because we felt like we needed time away from the project. That may be something for the future, it may may not, I'm not sure at this point.

Ron: You mentioned 18 months. That's a long time. Was the process long enough or was it too long?

Jim: Well, I think for our purposes, we accomplished what we set out to do, to come up with some kind of realistic appraisal of the church. What had gone on in the past. We've projected ahead some 17 goals or points or strategy of ministry for the future. We're continuing to go back and evaluate those, abandoning some, creating new ones. So the process technically is not over although formal relationships with the consultant are over. I think it... every church would deal with it in a different amounts of time slots. For our church, it appeared to be right, our chairperson after the initial final report was made to our church conference, just breathed Phewwww, our people were ready to back off a little bit. 155

Ron: You tell me your personal feelings about your involvement in what this churches is now becoming.

Jim: We talked about the fact that the Bethel Bible and some of the other things that have happened, I think the church has a realistic idea of who the church is in relation to the community. We know that as the community continues to change, that we're going to develop some apartment house ministries plus housing ministries, this kind of thing. We know that we've got to do something about our evangelistic outreach, that we've centered most of our attention for the last too many years on nurturing our people and maintaining our facilities, etc. We've got to build some new facilities if we do some other programming. So we're aware of our failures. Our church growth projections as far as new members and attendance and this kind of thing have not kept up with our goal completely thought last year we were right on target, this year we're below target with new members. We still are working to audit our membership roles and so the actual total figures are what we would like them to be. But we're aware of that, and as we reflect back on what we've done, giving us a tool and a developmental aid to look at ourselves. We've still got that and the expertise and know-how, we know how we can do it best. Then we develop programs year in and year out and we're having to meet some of our long-range...

Ron: So your feeling personally about the church...

Jim: I think the church is a much stronger church today as result of the church growth involvement. We have a better picture of ourselves and that certainly is going to help.

Ron: What advice do you give in kind of wrapping this up to other pastors who might be considering becoming involved in total church growth?

Jim: I think a pastor needs to do some reading in this area from Wagner, Arn, MacGavern and others to get a feel for what it's all about. There's some new things happening, you and I were talking earlier about the discipleship concept that seems to be emphasized more now in 1983 than it was back in 1978-79. Then the idea that we must be conscious especially of numerical growth but there is a spiritual side to discipleship that maybe in the early stages of church growth development, didn't ignore but just didn't emphasize. So I like some of the changes. But to read, study,

see what it's all about. I think it's of utmost importance for any church that's going to get into this in a creative and meaningful way that they're going to have to get with a consultant, utilize their resources and expertise, go through a similar-type experience that we went through to do some self-evaluation of the church. Otherwise, you're just spinning your wheels and not really serious about the whole enterprise. So, I think the consultant, even though the money sometimes is a large chunk, needs to be spent. We spend it on everything else. We don't teach Sunday School without literature. We don't have a good revival without a spokesman. You can't do much with this kind of program or any program unless you pay the price. Sometimes that's not only money but 1900 man-hours of work. 156

Ron: If you went to another church, would you initiate this program there?

Jim: I would have no problems about doing it. I think every church is different, and if the church was in the situation that it was hesitant or unsure or really had no idea of who and what is was, I think this is an ideal... I know of no better way for a church to look and give a good self appraisal of itself and to find out what's going on.

Ron: Jimmy, I really appreciate the time you've given to this, the interview...

Campground United Methodist Church
Marietta, GA
Lay Leaders

Key leaders in the total church growth program. We are going to talk to them about what happened in their church as a result of the program, The Total Church.

Don Robinson
Lois Stevens
Jim Stevens
Mary Ellen Osgood
Robert Mantell

Ron: Folks, I'd like one or two of you to describe for us your congregation prior to the introduction to the Total Church Growth program. You may want to talk a little bit about the involvement of the people, the programs of the church, or the church's self image. You have a great history in this church. Maybe we could talk about the sense of mission you think the people had. What were their attitudes about growth, whether you talk about numerical or personal or spiritual growth. That kind of thing... Jim or Bob, who's going to do this?

Jim: Well, I'm fairly new, you know ten years I've been in the church. When I came to Campground Church, some of the main reasons that drew me here was the love of the people. Because it's friendly, open church. Of course, it's been a small church for years and years and years and the people that have grown up in Cobb County here has been the nucleus of it for years. But that's changed over the period of the last five or six years, and basically a lot of it's been because of the Total Church Growth program. But it's because of the people that were here prior to that that really caused that to happen, but our growth like most Methodist churches has not been the phenomenal growth at all. In fact, over the years that I've been here, our membership probably has an increase of 50-60 people, members I would imagine.

Ron: So it's kind of a straight line...

Jim: We were just existing, really. The church was existing and doing a community service to the people that had been here for years and years and years.

Ron: Don, can you pick up on that?

Don: I think this church as most churches had a core of people, 10% or whatever, doing the majority of the work. When we started the program, it had just finished a painful conversion from a small community church to a suburban church. We had just moved or the suburbs had moved out around us and that kind of changes the church. We had just completed that transition and I think there was a lot of potential... Everybody felt we had a lot of potential, we just didn't really know how to go about achieving this.

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Ron: Mary Ellen, you're the historian for the church. Give us a little background on how this church came into being... 158

Mary Ellen: Ok, It started in a little arbor across the road, in 1872. It seemed to be just a small core of people. A long time ago until we began to get into the Church Growth program. I felt that we were a church within four walls rather than reaching out to missions and other work. We grew because people like Don and Jim and all of them came with new ideas, and then the Church Growth program did come. I think it touched a spark that we were waiting for actually. We grew in membership and community and we were reaching out to Boy Scout programs and young people were made leaders then. They were interested in seeing the church grow.

Ron: Bob, could you talk a little bit about the... how you viewed the possibilities for growth prior to this program?

Bob: We were definately sitting in a growing area and I think we weren't taking advantage of it. I've been here since the little white church was up on the hill and have seen it grow. I think that since we've gotten involved in the program, we've moved forward. I feel we still have some other areas we need to work on.

Ron: When you were brought to the awareness that there was such a thing as a Total Church Growth program, one of you can speak on how you got on board or how the church was brought on board as far as embracing a program like this, laying out the money, delegating leadership and all the rest. Don, I think because you are the chairman, you could speak on that a little bit.

Don: Basically, I think, several leaders of the church attended a two day seminar on church growth which... they had a lot of general ideas, and at the meeting Mel Schell was there and he had a small part in the meeting. But, we were made aware at that time that there was a mechanism to go about a very systematic approach. We came back and through action by the Administrative Board voted to contract with Mel Schell to see exactly what we could do and which direction we should head. And through talking with him, the pastor and through his guidance, the Administrative Boards chairperson asked me if I would serve as chairperson of the committee and I said I would and we kind of went about picking a committee. We made out three different lists and tried to get a very well-rounded committee so that there wouldn't be any odd-balls or for every odd-ball, there would be a counter-balance or something. We worked out that we had a very well-rounded committee that I think most of the people respected and knew that the information coming out would be legitimate information. They weren't really worried that we were going to come out with something off the wall that would really change the church in a negative sort of way.

Ron: Was your committee a small group or were you able to get a pretty good base started?

Don: We had about 12-13. We had a good group. When we were picking them, we were encouraged by Mel Schell to pick people

that would be committed because it's a tremendous amount of work. 159
But to pick somebody that possibly wasn't already overloaded with work, which sometimes gets to be difficult because the people who are committed tend to already have a lot of work to do. But we did get a group that was very, very committed to the ideas and willing to put in the time.

Ron: When a program like this is introduced. You pay out money, the board makes all the decisions, and then it starts filtering out to the congregation what's been done, reactions come. Can you remember any objections that had to be overcome when this program first started?

Lois: No, but I know that you had to have a lot of dedicated people. I wasn't on the original committee. I came later on the task force. But you knew that you had to have a lot of dedication, a lot of hard work. And I don't remember, really, objections to it. In the board meeting is where it came up first.

Ron: Anybody... any objections that you encountered?

Jim: No, as a matter of fact, as I remember as it went through the administrative board, there was very little discussion about. We were excited. I think probably the excitement, a lot of the excitement came through Jimmy, our pastor, because since day one that he's been here, he can see nothing but good things for this church. With the potential that we had, the area that we're in, and although there's been a lot of hard work by a lot of good lay people in this church. Without the backbone of Jimmy pushing every one of us, keeping us on our toes, keeping this thing rolling. Even over the years that's gone by since we've first started, I've felt like that maybe the Total Church Growth program could have gone down the tubes.

Mary Ellen: He's so enthusiastic about the whole thing that made us want to...

Ron: So the objections would be minor and would have been dealt with in a...

Don: The only, not objections at all because it went through unanimous and everything, there were several people that were concerned, in talking with them afterwards, that we were not getting into some kind of flimsy, flashy program that would be just numbers so you could put numbers down on a sheet of paper. Actually talk about growth in numbers, which that comes, but also growth, you know the personal spirituality. They didn't want to just be numbers because if you get just numbers, you're in the front door and then out the back door six months later. They wanted it to be a good quality program and they were reassured that was what we were after too. They were happy with that.

Ron: So, if you had objections, they were legitimate ones for clarification and that sort of thing. This is a very involving program that you mentioned. You take key lay people and ask them to meet almost once a week and sometimes extra weekends for seminars. How does that affect the ongoing life of the church,

particularly for those people who are involved. Do other programs get set aside? You've got all the emphasis on analysis and writing reports and all that? Can you be a church and do church growth? 160

Lois: Yes, because I think that because of being involved in church growth, it makes you more excited about the other jobs you have been doing and I think you do a better job.

Mary Ellen: In a sense, it came natural that we were just doing these things, not because we were supposed to do them, but because we like to do it.

Robert: Do you think we also got other people involved, handing all this out, letting them analyze basically themselves.

Ron: So when you passed out this questionnaire, you had quite a range of responses to this questionnaire, didn't you?

Jim: Yes, and they were surprising, some of the answers that came out of it that the church was not aware of. There are individuals that I would have never even dreamed about that a lot of people don't understand where they are spiritually. A lot of people really don't know and they go to the church to find that very thing. That's what they're searching for. But nobody ever asks the question. Nobody ever goes to the pastor and says, "Tell me where I am spiritually?" But whenever you put it down in a questionnaire, someone's doing it in privacy and they don't have to sign their name to it, all these things come out. I think that was the key that really kicked Campground Church off into the programs that we're into now, three or four years later. [sic]

Ron: The analysis of it, the questionnaire?

Jim: What do the people want? The church is built around the community. You got to do what the people want and I think that's what's happening now.

_____: Without a doubt for the first part of it anyway, the questionnaire is the backbone of it. We did something a little different than what Mel Schell had recommended on it. We chose after a lot of thought, we talked about it a lot, we did not hand out... well, we handed out the questionnaire at church for several Sundays and then we called everybody that was in the church. But we did not fill out the questionnaire at church. That was one thing different than had been recommended. But after a lot of thought on that, I think we came out with a very good questionnaire and gave the people the time to do it... to really think about it. They didn't have their neighbor sitting there looking at what they were writing. For us anyway, don't you feel that way, Bob, that turned out to be a lot better because we got a... we all felt very positive about it.

Ron: So you didn't try to have a meeting here; get a select group or anything like that. You just did a general canvas so to speak, and about 90%, as I understand, responded to that. Well here's a program starting under way. You got the questionnaires

back and now you got to do a lot of other things. Did you follow 161
the program step by step?

Don: Except for that we pretty much went down the line with what was recommended. Of course, we talked about everything to make sure we didn't do it just because they said do it. But we looked for a good reason not to and we didn't find any... It seemed like it was pretty well ironed out from what I could see but we followed it pretty much step by step.

Ron: Knowing what you know now about it, would you do that again? Would you follow it step by step or was there someplace you could have modified?

Robert: I think it was good. Basically, I wouldn't have changed it.

Mary Ellen: You just have to be organized for anything to be a success, have goals and follow them.

Lois: I believe that Mel Schell was a real good leader.

Jim: I do too. And I think the fact that you hire a consultant. We pay him to tell you what you're going to do. If you're assuming that he's a professional in his field and like most things, we all think we know a better way, but if you listen to an individual like that, and we did, I think we were committed to follow his program. I think that's what they got.

Don: I wound up being on the phone to him almost, well not every week, but real often. Him trying to keep me out of the ditch, or something like that. It worked out I don't think you could do it without the consultant. It's just almost mandatory from my viewpoint. I wouldn't have wanted to have been the chairperson, just out on my own. I think you have to have that consultant to give you some... because he had such insight. You know what's happening in your church, but he knows what's happening in a lot of churches. You may have a unique situation or it may not be unique and you just think it is. You can give a lot of good insight.

Ron: There's got to be a feeling during the program, the actual daily mechanics of doing the program. Do you think the program was too complicated or burdensome or too simplistic? What do you think about that?

Mary Ellen: I was thinking in the very beginning, when he came on Sunday night. He seemed like rather lengthy at that time. But the more we got into the program, it worked out real good, especially when we had the program on Spiritual Gifts, (I liked that very much). But in the beginning, it seemed like to me the meetings were kind of long. We were trying to get started, I'm just being truthful.

Ron: The mind can only recieve what the seat can endure. Did you think there was some burnout on the part of some of the people who were involved in that? After awhile did it lose it's spark?

Robert: I was trying to think back on that today. My opinion probably would be that if it could be shorter, it would be great. But it takes the time to get fully involved in it so you get the best from what you're doing. It should stay that long. I was trying to remember anybody who really dropped out but I don't... everybody was basically involved, and it was something we wanted.

Ron: There's a factor in any kind of change that called dwell time because you dwell on it. You just kind of ruminate in it, you soak in it's juices so to speak. Some programs are built and developed to take some time which allows for that dwell time. Do you think that might have been a factor there or is it just that it got long and it could have been shorter?

Don: I think there was just a lot of things... because we were making a plan that we want to last for at least the next decade. We wanted to be sure that we were on good firm ground. We had fantastic people on our committee. We had people in real estate that knew a lot about the area, we had people that were used to looking at statistics, we had people that just had a lot of good common sense. Everybody worked really, really hard at it. I think what got us through at the end, was we could see the end. We're going to have this report and we're going to present it to the church. As far as burnout, when it was over with, I was just wasted. That was because we did not carry out, and that's part of the problem, a negative factor. There was the follow-up that you need to do. We chose to give the responsibility after it was passed by the board, to the different people on the council of ministries. It probably would have been more effective if we had followed it up. But I know, personally, I was just... I had done all I could do. That was the way a lot of folks were. We finished up and we didn't have the dropouts, but if we had gone on for another year, I think we would have had a real problem.

Ron: I've heard that you put about 1900 people-hours in that labor. Somebody said that it was very much like labor. That when that baby was born, they just wanted to look at its pretty blue eyes and everything else. Well, it's been almost three years now since the church did this analysis and began to project what it would like to see done. You came up with 17 suggestions or goals that you would like to see happen as a result of your insights gained from the questionnaire. What changes have been made in the congregation's attitude toward church growth? Is it in it's self image or sense of mission?

Lois: You know whenever we first come here, there was mostly older folks. There wasn't a lot of little children in this church. Since church growth, we have a lot of small children. On Sunday morning when our youth minister has his children's sermon, the children just come rushing up from the congregation to the front. And I think that's been a big impact.

Ron: This represents young families

Jim: You know even at one time, years ago when I first started, this church was basically run by people who had been here for years and years and were good solid people that had been running

it for years. But because of some of the things that began to happen, they started relinquishing that responsibility and it started going to younger and younger and younger people until these younger people had bigger and brighter ideas than most of us could even think about. So it brought out the vitality of the church. And once it starts spreading around, we got youth ministers at that time and they started the youth programs to building up... and there's just been a lot of things that have happened because of it. I don't know that it... maybe it would have happened without the Church Growth program. I don't know. But I don't think so. I think that it had a profound effect.

Lois: We've become more mission oriented too. Because of that we have the MUST ministry here which is Methodists United in Serving and Training. They have a boys home that boys in flight trouble can go and live in this home. I think now that it's coming to the Methodist church, maybe through the conference, but at one time it wasn't just depending on people to help. I think that we've become more missions oriented.

Ron: What about your sense of outreach? Are you becoming an intentionally reaching-out church or is that something that still needs to be developed?

Lois: Can I say something? One of the best outreaches of our church, I think, is our Senior Citizens Group called the VIP. It's not only our church, it's the community. We have Catholics, we have Baptists. But to me, this is one of the greatest outreaches of our church. We have a monthly meeting where we have a fellowship supper and then some type of program. And we have been told that we are the only group in the area, any church in the area that does this with their group. On Thanksgiving and Christmas, we have a sit-down dinner for them, at Christmas Santa Claus and everything. To me, this is one of the biggest outreaches of our church.

Ron: Was that something that was intentionally identified as a need in the community and you then put together or what is that?

Mary Ellen: We had one already but yet it wasn't as active. It was very small. I think it created more interest. And if I can say something about the older people when Mr. Schell was interviewing people on the Sunday afternoon, I went in with a lady who was 70 years old. She was saying that... he'd ask her that she was not happy with anything in the church. She said, "Well, I need more to do." She was 70. The next year she was communion steward. I think that not only put the young people to work doing more, but some of the older people who were in a lot, they had more to do, too.

Don: I think it helped us recognize basically all the programs we have now are because we've based it on the information we've gained through this questionnaire and our analysis of it. It helped us recognize for years and years after I first came, it had a picture of this sanctuary we were going to build in the future. We were all just thinking this was just a couple years away. We recognized the point that one of the limitations on our growth is not our sanctuary, which we're not filling up right

now, there's still room for more people. But it's our educational space. We're full and we needed more classes. We recognized that and we have because of the Church Growth program and the analysis, we have started some new Sunday School classes but we're very limited on many we can start. That's really a bottleneck for us on how much we can grow and get involved in Sunday School, which is kind of the basis for growth. The number you have in Sunday School almost directly relates to the number you have in church. We have a real problem with that and we recognize that and through our suggestions, the building committee is in the process of studying the possibility of building some educational spaces just from that. We also saw that one of the things that just really surprised me and I think everybody that was on the committee, when it came back to people had been in church for years and years and years but still weren't certain of their salvation. That amazed me that you could be, and I guess that I figured that just through osmosis you would get it-- You know what salvation was and about the grace God, and things like that. Through that we've started a program that we've got a mid-week Bible Study that has really been a tremendous asset for us I think.

Ron: Is that a particular Bible Study?

Don: Bethel Bible Series. We've completed the teacher-training section, We're tired from that. We've started that and to know our church, you would have to have some background on this, but we have 90 people coming out every Wednesday night for Bible Study, I mean in Intense Bible Study. I think we could have had more but we limited to 90 and we have a mechanism so everybody will eventually get around to it. We started off... We opened up the rolls to have 90 people, and within a week and a half or maybe two weeks, the slots were filled. That is a fantastic program and part of that, we realized we needed some type of program, and we studied to see what would be the best type of program, but we knew we needed the program because of the church growth.

Jim: That's one of the things that came out of it was because... one of the things that the Church Growth questionnaire asked was about the Bible, and people said that they wanted to know more about the Bible. If nothing else came out of church growth, I think that that is going to be enough for Campground. Although that's not all, that's only one aspect that's really going. But Don didn't tell you everything that happened about Bethel Bible, and maybe you've heard it, but 17 of them started with our pastor the leader of it. He spent two weeks up in Madison, WI, learning to teach these 17 people. Fifteen of them went through a two-year intensive program, and 15 of them completed it. Only one moved away and one became pregnant. No, but you can have a lot of problems and she had another small child, but that was her reason for dropping out. But because of that, now, there are 90 people. I'm as amazed about it as Jimmy is every Wednesday night, whenever you sit down and there's 85-90 people here for intensive Bible study every week. Now, like Jimmy says, "You show me a Methodist... you show me a Baptist church that meets on Wednesday night and has this response.

Mary Ellen: You should see all these cars out here on Wednesday nights. 165

Ron: You mentioned the seminar on the Gifts of the Spirit. Has that been elaborated on? Have people gained a knowledge of who they are?

Mary Ellen: We went into different groups. We were in the sanctuary. I think that all of us realized that we do have at least one gift and we just felt real good over the Spiritual Gifts program, that was just one night probably that we had on that.

Ron: They had 17 different things that they were trying to do goals to have happen in the church. Is there something that impressed you that you see happening now as a result of that.

Robert: One thing that comes to mind, Visually you see it. That the area I would change the appearance of the church itself. The buildings were just here and there, on our overall plan, it was all kind of grouped together at some point in time and hopefully a lot of it will. But there was a big hole right out here, and it's been graded off and there's been signs put up just to let people that we're here as a church. They go by and see the campground across the way, and that's sticks in their mind. A lot of times I think they missed us. People moving in knew... were not familiar with us, they didn't know who we were. I think the sign and just the changes all of a sudden, "Hey, that's a nice looking place there."

Ron: You did some remodeling in your sanctuary, too, didn't you?

Robert: We also changed the choir area, totally. That made an improvement in how they sound now.

Don: Some felt it finally got the sound system.

Don: That came from a realization, the reason we decided to do that, a realization that we don't need a 1,000-seat auditorium right at this point in time, maybe 15 years from now. We hope and pray that we will. But until we go at least double session or have two meetings, we don't really need that. We decided this was a temporary sanctuary, but we decided we're going to make it look nice, fix it up, spend the money. We found out a lot of things like the nursery... I didn't know how important the nursery was as far as getting people into your church, or once you get them in, getting them to stay. We've changed it around and redecorated it and the people come and see that it's a good nursery. They don't mind leaving their kids, so they'll come back again. And things like that, that we really hadn't paid enough attention to, once we get them into the church, they see that we have good programs.

Ron: So it's more than just having a friendly church that will attract and hold people?

Jim: You know, it's like advertising in business. We advertise

In order to get our practice or business out in the open. And like Bob says, the changes that have been made from the street side of this church, Bob can tell you, I don't know when they built the gym building over there. But it's been there at least 12 years, maybe 15 years. We cut down the trees out in the front, now you can't imagine how many trees or how deep the hole was out in the front, but it was all cut down and cleared out. A brother of a friend of mine came by his brother's house. He was raised within 20 miles of this church. Three years ago, and he drove by and he went over to his brother and he said, "I see you built a new building behind the church." And there it's been setting back in the woods for 15 years and people don't know it. A lot of churches don't know what the exposure means. To make sure that people can see. Everybody talked about the campground. We even put up a little blue Methodist sign. All our sign said was United Methodist Church and then the block for the name. You know what it said? Campground. Well, everybody, all they ever saw was the campground, the Methodist campground, which is not, although it's Methodist, is not a part of our congregation, our church, although a lot of the members are. When they saw the sign, the campground was enough, they didn't see us.

Ron: Do you think this did something for the self-image of the church?

Robert: Oh, absolutely.

Ron: Don, you've been sitting there a long time. You probably had short pants when this first started.

Robert: Not quite. I moved here in 1955 and we had a little white church up there. I think it just pulls us out to the road really. I think that was the main thing. People know we're here and they come and I'm in sales, it pays to advertise a little bit. People are moving in and you ought to attract them, really.

Jim: Ron, you talked about... the first eight years that I was here, we talked about that sign that's out there on the road. The first eight years that I was here, we talked about that sign, and finally we did it. Talk about dwelling...

Mary Ellen: While we are on building, I thought .. we just didn't come to church except for one Sunday to the next. The building were just not used. But since Church Growth, you cannot pass here, there's something going on, square dancing, arobics, band, scouts, you name it.

Ron: We in this building tonight because they're using the other area for some purpose.

Robert: And from that community involvement. The community again recognizes that we're here.

_____: And even some of the things that come out like in Church Growth was that probably our biggest shortcoming was probably the thing we need to do the most, and that's in evangelism. And that's our biggest... I would say if we got... But that's hopefully some changes have been made in that.

Ron: So what it sounds like is you got the house in order, and you got the people starting to learn and to function in leadership, and now you're ready to make that outward penetration.

Jim: Well, we've only been six weeks into Bethel Bible into the congregation now. We're in the first part of it; this is the sixth week that we've had it and we've got two years to go in it and then another class starting in January that goes two years. Five years down the road, if it progresses as much as it has been the last three years, Campground should be a very far reaching out church.

Don: I think it would be a mistake to enter into this... just looking for, say, one year from now we're going to have all of our problems solved. Because I was... and there's still disappointments that we've had. One of the key things that I wanted us to get very involved with was lay visitation programs. That still hasn't taken off. But I think that will come in time, but I was really chomping at the bit, "Let's get this going." But I think the people weren't as ready as I think our committee recommended. I think that will come when the people are ready, when they have grown spiritually where they're ready to do that, they're ready to share their faith. I think that will come, but it's still that... at this point in time it's not where it should be.

Ron: So there is a sequence to this Church Growth Business. Lois have you noticed any changes in lifestyle of individuals? You've been doing all kinds of programming, but is it really affecting the way people are living, the way their commitment is to the church? We've talked about it a little bit but do you have anything specific that you can point to?

Lois: No, other than financial. I think the financial commitment has been a lot more since Church Growth. I've beginning to get ready to be treasurer of the church next year. This past year has been the greatest year that Campground Church has ever had. So I think the financial commitment has come since Church Growth.

Ron: That's a real barometer, how people give to the church.

Mary Ellen: When people get their heart right, they get ready to give.

Don: I think that you can point out, and it could be a coincidence, I don't really think it is. But since we started the program the last three years, we've paid all our apportionments 100%. The people... of course it came back in the questionnaire, they would be willing to give more if they approved of what we were going to do and everybody was in favor of a building program and things like that. I think the people have a ... as long as they have some sense of ownership, this is our plan and we're doing this, as long as they feel committed to that, the money has been, it's surprising because we were used to scraping and strain, but things are a lot better now than what

Lois: I believe that people have grown spiritually and that's maybe not all out of Church Growth, maybe some of it, different things-- the men's club, their retreats they've been on. There's been an awful lot of spiritual growth in these past few years in this church.

Mary Ellen: And a lot of hugging going on.

Jim: And you know even in the next year we're committed next year to our building program. We've already hired an architect. We've committed \$45,000 to the design of our new school building. Within the next year, we'll know whether the questionnaire was right when it said 67%-82% of the people would be willing to give to a new educational facilities because it's coming into a reality and this time next year, somebody's going to be asked to give the money. Not whether they were or not, they're going to be asked to give the money. That's going to have another impact on

Robert: Something just went through my mind. I really hadn't thought about it. Possibly what made it click or go was that instead of five of us getting together and saying let's go over here and do this, we found out what the church wanted to do and where they wanted to go.

Ron: We've talked about this program and from what I'm gathering, you feel that there was some real success in what you planned and what happened. What do you think are some of some of the key factors in the success of a program like this? In this church, what were some of the factors? We're looking at... usually you think of a church, you have a pastor, you have some committed lay people, the program originates with a consultant, you brought a consultant on. I'm not saying that these are the factors, and disallowing the involvement of the Holy Spirit or some other factors. I would like to begin to look at the influence of the pastor. Could this program succeed if the pastor's doing something else? Talk about that a little bit.

Don: My feeling on that is the pastor has to be very positive about it. He has to be very much for it. I think it doesn't need to be something the pastor does. He doesn't need to run the show. He has enough to do already. But he needs to be a part of it. He needs to be mentioning it when you get into your questionnaires. People have to feel in the congregation, that he is interested, he wants to know, and that it is an important part because, basically, if the pastor isn't interested in it, then the majority of the people aren't going to be interested in it. I think that he has to be... it's key for him to be very interested and looking for the good things that he can find out about it. I think if you expect... if you went into expecting the pastor to run the show, do everything, I think you would run into problems or he would run into problems with the... time problem. Again, our preacher was just fantastic. He was very positive and attended most of the meetings, not all of them, but most of the meetings. We knew that he was very pleased with what

we were doing. So I think he is key to that.

Ron: Is there a possibility that the pastor could be too involved or to... he could take over? Would that be a detriment to the program?

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Jim: I think it would be if the pastor were that type of an individual. We're fortunate that we don't have a pastor like that. Our pastor does have a way of designating responsibility without telling you go get the job done. He's got a way of doing... Like Don, I feel he was the key factor to our total program since day one that he's been here... of this church growth program. But, also, I believe... well, I know that God works, I know that his Holy Spirit works within our church, and I know that he answers prayers in this church. We were blessed because of it with Don being chairman of the committee. I think he was the right person at the right time to make the thing follow through. He had the expertise to do it. I was one of the original committee. Just about the time the committee got started, I started traveling alot. I was on the road 5 or 6 days a week. Every meeting that we had had, Don made sure that I was completely aware of everything that went on. So, although, the pastor was committed, I know he was committed to Don, I know that Don was committed to the committee to make sure that it functioned properly. And without commitment... if a church doesn't want to do... if it doesn't want to grow, it's a waste of money to go hire a consultant or line up some kind of program even among yourselves to do it. But because we were committed, because our pastor was committed, he caused the rest of us to be more committed.

Ron: Do think there was a selection process that made it more successful or was it a situation that you all come and anybody willing to we'll give you a job to do? Was there a little more done that that, Bob?

Bob: I think they selected the people they wanted to be involved. I guess, probably looking at it, I wasn't involved in that. One day I was tapped on the shoulder, "Will you help?" I think the selection was done again to balance everything else out. Also, I would think that they were looking for people with some commitment, too. I know that it was...

Ron: Now, people can have commitment. Do you think that they were also... were they looking for skills that would be drawn for a program like this, or is that not as important?

Don: I think it needs to be and we looked for well-rounded people. We wanted to include somebody from real estate, people who were used to looking at statistics and things like at, and it wasn't going to blow them away. We wanted people that just had real good common sense, good knowledge. I think you need everything. If you get a couple statisticians there, they can just go crazy with pens and pencils and you never go anywhere. But, I think the thing that made us click, and we worked very well together, is there was no really one person doing it. When we made the presentation to the administrative board, we made a big deal about it. I think everybody felt like they had put

their best into it, and it was a total effort everybody had the pride of ownership of doing this and being involved in it and it wasn't... I don't think one person could stand up, no matter who they were, could it be even the preacher, sit down and write a program and say this is what we're going to do, this is it, and our church will grow, and everything will look just rosy. That won't work. I think it's got to be well-rounded, and everybody contributed and that's the reason it worked, because everybody was willing to contribute.

Ron: Could other churches expect to receive the same willingness to spend this time and energy and resources from their people as this church did from yours. You have a unique church that... Do you think other churches can expect this kind of give from the people?

Mary Ellen: With the leadership... if they have the leadership we have, I think they could.

Ron: Were you unique though, in the sense that you have the leadership that a lot of churches wouldn't have and consequently they couldn't really expect the same. Or is it something else happening there?

Jim: I don't think so because I think this is still basically good old country church and I think there's every type of people in this church. For some reason, who knows what the answer is, the people are willing to follow when things begin to happen, and things are happening at Campground.

Don: I think we had a lot of things going good for us. The committee turned out, I don't want to beat that to death, but the committee turned out to be a fantastic committee. But, the program itself, once you get into analyzing your church and seeing so much potential, or where we can correct some errors, it gets exciting, it really does, and you build on it, and you get excited about it. I think anybody would that is really committed. To get people to come and work that way, it takes some excitement, nobody has the magic to do that. They have to be committed and ready. And I think once you get into it, the more you get into it, you get excited about, "Hey, we can really have an impact and do something really good."

Ron: So there's enough kindling in the program itself to apply a little, just add people and there's a possibility that things can take off.

Lois: Just add one person and there's that spark.

Jim: Something to get the ball rolling and to do what people wanted to do. If you were making shirts, and you interviewed 100 people and 40 of them said they wanted a red shirt, and 30 of them wanted a blue shirt, and the rest wanted a yellow shirt, you'd be crazy to make all green shirts. Right?

Mary Ellen: I think really that one of the things that really made us go was to have put on the board how our Sunday School was going. We were not growing. Just going down, down, down in

church attendance. You need to to be checking up at little every once in awhile and I think that made it.

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Jim: You know another thing Don and me, talking about that, about people in our church. Our congregation really hasn't grown phenominally since just Church Growth, it's gone up and approached it, but one of the best things that's happened is that our rolls have been purged, for the last five years. We have removed more inactive people from our rolls. We don't know where they are or what they're... were counted as members five years ago, but today are not. And I would guess that that number is up close to 100.

Ron: And yet you've seen some growth.

Jim: And yet we've seen some growth. So our growth and percentage points for which 555 years ago, it's 600 today, doesn't show much of a growth, but actually, our membership has changed tremendously. Now we have active people.

Ron: Active people. That's a key word, absolutely. The consultant is, well apparently a key figure. You bring on somebody from the outside, pay them money to be involved with you. How important is the consultant in the life of the church during this process?

Robert: I think he's very important. First of all he guides you and that's... If you go into this you're going to have to take alot of time to study and figure out what in the world is going on, where if you can ask someone a question, I think, I guess it makes it a lot easier. But I think, if you get going off in the wrong direction, someone needs to get you going back down the road the right way. I thinks that's needed whether that's Mel or whoever. He does an excellent job. You just have to have the one person to direct you.

Ron: You don't think that just a real turned-on lay person could do that then?

Robert: I don't think so?

Ron: What's the difference?

Robert: Well, the knowledge. If what the program has to offer you and how to get this information out of the people. I think that.

Jim: Lots of times you can't see the forest for the trees. When you're among them, you become a part of the program. An outsider is always the best person to ask the questions. Then you sit down and you decide whether you are going to follow his advice or not. And you do this in an intelligent way. And we just chose to go with the consultant and to follow his guidelines because we felt like he was leading us in the right direction.

Don: And basically... well, I'm a chemist by trade. I know all about chemicals and things like that. And we had sales people and we had all kinds of... We had a lot of knowledge, everybody was committed, it was Christian, loved our church immensely, loved the Lord. But just that doesn't make you a good Church Growth person. You need somebody that has the experience, that has the expertise, that can come into your church, besides, like I said, I talk to him almost every week, getting ideas and bouncing things off of him, he was giving me insights. But he came in and gave us some very valuable information. We set it up on a Sunday, I think it was two Sundays, it may have been, and he talked very candidly to members of our church, about what they liked and what they didn't like. And the people felt... they opened up to him. If it had been me sitting there, they wouldn't have said, "Everything about the church is alright except I can't stand Don Robinson" So we got a lot more candid viewpoints, possibly, than we could have obtained through the interviews. Plus, that's his expertise, where our expertise, in the real world, is in something else. We just have the love of the Lord and the church. We don't have the expertise on Church Growth. 172

Ron: So, he was a catalyst, to use a chemical term, a change agent. When a program like this is brought in there's forms, you fill those all out, there's some talk and all that. But does the program have an aspect of the inspirational or motivational. In other words, a lot of what you did in the beginning was analysis and looking at things. Was there someone or an aspect of the program, a dimension is the program that was moving, that was motivating, was uplifting in that respect? Or does that have to be brought up by your own selves?

Jim: I don't think a church grows because of a program. I think it grows because of the spirit of people within the church and our commitment to the Lord. As we become more committed, we reach out more, we reach out to other people. When we begin reaching out to other people, the church automatically grows. It grows by itself. But you have to have some basis to begin that on. Some people say, "Let the Lord take care of it. He'll take care of it." The Lord doesn't take care of it unless we, as his followers, as his Christians, reach out and do something about it.

Mary Ellen: And the inspiration might not have come while we're into the paper work. But later, things like Lay Witness Mission and all these things that brought about.

Jim: I think the beauty of what's coming is...

Don: I felt, and I think the committee possibly felt that way, I know I felt that way. We had a devotion before we started, we headed like that. I had a real feeling that I was doing work for Campground Church, I was doing work for myself, I was improving myself. We were trying to improve our church and I just feel that naturally, you know, goes back to working for the Lord. I got a real sense of mission out of it myself; feeling that we were doing what God wanted us to do. That was the spark for the committee and I think people could see that because we

had several folks comment about, "How in the world did you ever get people to work that hard, that long?" I think they did it because they felt they were doing something God wanted to do. 173

Ron: So there's an internal combustion that kind of keeps the thing moving in and of itself. You were involved in this thing for a long time, over a year. Was the process long enough? Did that get a little long? Maybe another way of asking it, what could have happened had the process continued for another period of time. Now, we talked for a little bit about "Boy, we were glad when it was over," in the sense, one aspect of it. Talk to me a little bit, what could have been done, for instance, as a follow-on? Do you feel there was a need for that?

Robert: That's where, I think, it could have been possibly short on how to do the proper work. We got everything done now. After we get the things rolling, we need to back and take a look and see where have we gone and even give a report of it, "Hey, we did this back in 19__, and I didn't realize 1979-80, I just forgot all the dates. But, just go back and say, Hey, we accomplished the group of the people that were involved and get back together. I don't think it has to a long-term thing but just a couple of meetings to take a look at what you've done and the 17 points that you want to do. But if you've only accomplished two of them, you need to work on the of the other ones. But we've accomplished more than that. I think that we need to go back and analyze, have we accomplished some of the things we want to do? Where do we need to go from here? And that revitalization, I guess, is what I'm trying to...

Jim: And it might be if you did it all at one time, for instance, if the process had gone on for a year and a half instead of a year, it could have been disastrous for the program. Now, that we're three years down the road and even beginning to think about it again, it kind of excites me to think that maybe we should look it over again to see what we did two or three years ago. What were we looking for in 1979 and how far have we progressed since, in 1983. I think maybe you've stirred up some excitement that maybe we'll go back and take a look. And maybe that second effort will come out of it now. Although there's been some very, very positive things. I don't think Church Growth has stopped since it was first begun here. And I don't think it's going to stop for a long time. That's not to say that the process can't be speeded up now.

Ron: Lois, talk to me a little bit about your personal feelings, about your involvement in this church as it's now becoming.

Lois: Well, I think I've grown spiritually. I've taken on a job right now as church treasurer that I never would have taken before. So, I think I've grown along with the church.

Ron: Mary Ellen...

Marilyn: I think that we... I don't feel like we need to be doing more. I would have never taken on the job as treasurer, of the cemetery for perpetual care, and that has been a big, big, job. I just can't do enough. But, I really think we're all

excited and want to keep doing more.

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Ron: Is that for a particular reason? Can you focus in on why you're willing to do something now that maybe even a couple of years ago you were retisant?

Marilyn: I can't say that it's wanting to acheive. That wouldn't be right. I think we just want to do more for the Lord.

Don: And I think we've studied the gifts of the Spirit and everything and everybody's talents and I think that people were able to recognize what they had and that they had something they could do, some way they could fit into the overall picture of the church and make it better. I think there's been a willingness, maybe because of that, I think that whole feeling has permeated the church. But, like I say, we had a Spiritual Gifts seminar and I think that helped. But things like that where you recognize that everybody fits in the big picture.

Tape ran out...